

환생은 괜히/ 해 가지고

Illustrated by 미키
토이카 퓨전판타지 장편소설
INTIME FUSION FANTASY STORY

intime

I Reincarnated For Nothing

– 환생은 괜히 해가지고 –

- Part 3 -

-Author-
Toika

Chapter 48

Frate's Festival (1)

The inn owner gave Artpe's party a once over. He tsked as he spoke.

"A single night in the guest room will cost 5 silvers. The cost of the meal and bath water will have to be paid separately."

In the past year, the three of them had been under the influence of Maetel's Innate ability. They had grown a lot, so they no longer received questions like 'Are you kid alone?' or 'Where's your guardian?'

The fact that they didn't hear such words was a blessing, but...

"Why is it so expensive? This inn doesn't look so grand that it should be charging 5 silvers!"

It was too expensive! A cheap inn in a big city should cost a silver. At most, it should cost two silvers! At Artpe's righteous indignation, the innkeeper snorted as he gave a retort.

"Do you not know what kind of a situation Frate is in? The numerous countries connected to Diaz by the ocean are participating in a limited-time auction right now. This auction was stopped three years ago, but it is being opened once again this year. The merchants from Diaz kingdom as well as other kingdoms are all gathered here. The streets are packed with people that came to spectate this auction. You should be thankful that there's at least one room left."

"It was stopped 3 years ago!?"

If that was true, it was no wonder people were all gathering here. When Artpe let out a sigh, the innkeeper took advantage of that moment. He started acting in a condescending manner.

"I've been saving that room. I was going to rent the room to someone that could pay a higher price. However, I'm being very considerate towards you and the two women.

I'm sure they'll be annoyed if you take them to somewhere that is more run down than this place."

Artpe hadn't wanted unwanted attention, so they were wearing robes. The Artifacts they possessed was influencing how their appearance was perceived, and it was supposed to make them look average. However, it didn't allow them to hide their appearance. It was becoming more troublesome especially for Maetel as she got older, because she was becoming more and more beautiful. He wouldn't go into the trouble it had caused.

"Ah, yes. You were being considerate."

"Of course. I'm not joking. You should go out right now to search for another room. No one will give it to you as cheap as me..."

Artpe could read what the owner was thinking. Basically, Artpe had come in here with two beautiful women(It was still more fitting to call them beautiful girls) on both arms, and he was jealous of Artpe.

This was why he was being verbose. He was trying to get the beauties to say thank you to him. He was old, but he was acting a bit cute. If everyone was as innocent as him, it would be worth living in this world.

"All right. I'll pay the 5 silvers."

"Each meal costs 30 bronze per person. A single tub of bath water is worth 1 silver. Have you tried our store's buttered corn cob? It is absolutely amazing."

"This is the first time in my life visiting this inn, so how could I have tasted it? All right. I'll try in once tonight. I don't really need the bath water. So..."

Artpe handed over 5 silvers and 90 bronze as he asked a question.

"When's the auction, ajusshi?"

"It's tomorrow."

"The timing is uncanny."

He had to spend a lot for lodging because of the auction, but in the end, this was a

golden opportunity for Artpe.

Originally, this auction used to be held periodically in the harbor town of Frate. It had been the gathering place of various items ranging from specialty items made in Frate to Artifacts. Loot gathered from nearby Dungeons and ocean were had been gathered here. The auction had been the confluence of treasures!

It was very difficult to have a complete assessment of the worth of specialty items when one went into an auction. However, Artpe could clearly and accurately assess the worth of any items that was viewed through his eyes.

In his previous life, he had participated in auctions in the human world. He had cleared out all the treasures that the humans had failed recognize.

Of course, it had all ended up in the hands of the Demon King. The very thought of it made him wake up at night. It made him grind his teeth. However, it was no longer like that! He could pocket everything now!

“Why? Are you going to participate?”

“It is a festival that hasn’t happened in 3 years, so shouldn’t we take the opportunity to look around?”

“If so, you should take good care of the ladies. Gangsters always gather in places where there is money. If you go out with the pretty girls, you could probably fill an ocean with the men that’ll try to pick a fight with you.”

“I’ve already experienced it plenty, so you don’t have to worry about that.”

Artpe snorted as he took the key from the innkeeper. As always, Maetel and Sienna behaved as they watched him speak to the innkeeper. It was the absolute rule of the party. They had to leave the negotiations with other people to Artpe.

“Ooh-wah. It is really small.”

The room had a single bed, and there was a lot of dust covering it. There was also a chair in the room. That was it. First, he used his cleaning magic. It took him two seconds to make the room look like it was new. Then he placed his bedroll on top of the bed to make it cushy. Next, he took out an enormous wooden tub that could easily fit two people with room to spare from his Dimensional pouch. He created water and

fire at the same time, and he filled the tub with hot water. He created a cozy bathhouse where no one would disturb them.

"There is nothing Artpe cannot do."

"You guys wash up first. I'm not sure about myself, but you guys are really dirty."

"Let's wash together!"

Maetel yelled out energetically, but Artpe pushed the two towards the wooden tub. Then he closed the curtain. Maetel and Sienna continued to complain loudly, but he completely ignored them.

They were now at an age where such proprietary had to be observed. Their level was high, and they possessed warrior type abilities. So their development was much faster than the girls their age. Artpe decided to omit that line of thought.

"Let's see..."

While the two girls were taking a bath, Artpe carefully leaned back on the chair. The chair was so weak that it felt as if it would give way at any moment. He gently closed his eyes as he stretched out his Mana Strings into the surrounding.

The Mana Strings went past the inn towards the large roads. Then they went past the large roads to the square. From the square, the Mana Strings extended out to the whole city.

That's right.

He was surveying the entire city from within the small room of the inn.

In the past year, the party had focused on Sienna's growth rather than the development of Maetel and Artpe. Above all else, their goal was to arrive at Frate, so they hadn't been able to raise their levels too much.

However, Artpe had focused on gaining command over his Mana String until he was sick of it. He also focused on increasing his proficiency in other magic spells. There were the basic everyday magic like Fire and Aqua. Then there was the Hyper Rubbing, which had been unexpectedly helpful in decisive moments. Obviously, Mana String had developed into being his main spell.

He had used all his spell whenever he had Mana to spare, so most of his spells had exceeded level 40. Amongst his spells, Mana String had reached level 51. No words need to be said, but the power and effectiveness of his spells couldn't be compared to before.

It wasn't just the level of his spells. Whenever he gathered money, he used Dungeon merchant Mycena to gather spell books for all classes. He used them to increase his Magic stat. It resulted in his Magic stat reaching 1,200 when he was at level 187.

In his prior live, Artpe had gone past the 1,200 mark when he had reached level 300. His magical energy reached a realm where his level couldn't be used to gauge his power. Moreover, he possessed enough magical energy to overcome disparities that should be impossible to overcome. He possessed that power within his hands.

His spell level was over 50, and he possessed a massive pool of magical energy. It had reached 1,200. It would have been strange if he wasn't able to search a mere city with his magic.

His Mana Strings had started out as several dozen strands, but now it had branched into hundreds than thousands. In a flash, his Mana Strings had blanketed the entire city. The Mana Strings were able to observe everything near their vicinity, and all the information was delivered to their owner. Nothing could escape Artpe's eyes.

Nothing.

“...huh?”

However, when he completed his search of the city, he wanted to deny the validity of his absolute ability. It felt as if he learned an information that should be present in this city.

‘There is no way... There is no way she’s here.’

He denied the reality of the situation as he strengthened his Read All Creation ability. Artpe was so taken aback that he had almost fallen over backwards in his seat.

Afterwards, the curtain was put aside, and the naked form of the two girls was revealed to Artpe's eyes.

“Artpe, you should wash now!”

“You guys should put on some clothes.”

Artpe had one Mana String ready in preparation. He used it to close the curtain again. His reaction speed was on par with the speed of a goblin shooting its poison dart. Maetel clicked her tongue quietly from behind the curtain. He ignored her as he gave them instructions.

“Once yous put on your clothes, you guys should rest after eating dinner. Later, you should tell me what the buttered corn cob taste like.”

“What about oppa!?”

Sienna, who was putting on her clothes from behind the curtain, asked in surprise. Artpe let out a sigh. It seemed his body was now used to making that sound. He got up from the chair.

“I have something I have to do. I have to go do it right now.”

“Let’s go together!”

“You guys will blow my cover.”

In this city, it might have been better if Silpennon had been with him. In his past life, Silpennon had been awesome at sneaking around.

Unfortunately, Maetel and Sienna were incapable of moving around quietly. Maetel had used the authority as a hero to learn a thief’s skill called ‘Covert Steps’, yet it failed in making her able to move around quietly.

However, Artpe was different.

[Artpe]

[Level : 187]

[Stealth Lv19]

Even in his past life, there had been too many powerful beings around him. He had to learn how to move around quietly without being noticed. Now that all the skill restriction was lifted when he became a hero, his talent for being clandestine

blossomed!

Of course, it wasn't something he was proud of at all!

"That is why you shouldn't follow me."

"Chet."

First, Artpe retracted all his Mana String before he stepped out of the inn. As he walked amongst the large population, he naturally activated his Stealth ability. He melted into the crowd. Then he closed his purple colored eyes as he took off his ring.

The hair and eye colors, which had been changed into different colors, returned to their original coloring. His appearance, which had gone through minor changes to make it average, returned to its original form. Of course, he had his stealth activated, so no one noticed the change of his appearance.

'As the throne kept changing hands, the efforts to find the heroes had died down considerably. They've already forgotten the names and description of the heroes. At a certain point in time, it became more about hiding our unique appearances rather than hiding our identities with the artifacts.'

Of course, they had been able to avoid considerable amount of conflict using the artifacts. Still, he had worried about the possibility of facing someone that could see through the artifacts. He would have to tackle the issue of explaining why he was hiding his appearance using an artifact.

'Mycenae was confident that anyone below level 250 would be unable to see through it. I came to the same conclusion when I evaluated the artifact.'

This was why he had to take off the artifact right now.

His opponent was over level 250.

'It might have been better to have ignored her... '

Still, it would cause him way more trouble if she developed a weird misconception of him. This was why Artpe took the risk to assess his opponent's situation. It should be fine if he didn't get too close. It would probably be ok if he observed from afar...

"Oh my."

"Ah."

He had been walking as he had such thoughts. As he walked amongst the countless people, his eyes met a woman's eyes as if by a miracle.

When their eyes met, Artpe realized his Stealth ability had been seen through in an exceedingly easy manner. However, that wasn't the only problem he faced.

"Ah, hello. Are you here by yourself?"

When the woman discovered Artpe, she approached him. Her cheeks were slightly red. She had long red straight hair, and she had striking blood-colored eyes. She was taller than most men, and she possessed a voluptuous body that 100 out of 100 men would turn to look at her. She was a beautiful woman.

Moreover, Artpe knew this woman better than anyone in the human world.

[Etna Carlyfate Mirecarde]

[Demon race]

[Level :376]

[She is bound by the Innate ability Absolute Control.]

'I planned on observing her, yet I was caught on the outset. This is crazy... '

Artpe let out a sigh

It was the moment when he encountered the woman, who had been the 2nd ranked Four Heavenly King in his previous life.

Chapter 49

Frate's Festival (2)

Etna, who was the leader of the army of thieves, had her eyes fixed on Artpe. As he met her red-hot eyes, Artpe kept cursing the gods inside.

'This situation has become a big headache for me now. I wanted to move as quietly as possible, yet I was discovered by Etna. This happened despite the fact that she doesn't have any Thief type abilities. Either god placed a curse on me or the Demon King placed a blessing on me. It has to be one or the other. I'm sure of it.'

In his estimation, it didn't seem she was here on the orders of the Demon King. He assumed she wasn't here for a mission. She probably had come here, because she wanted to participate in Frate's festival. She didn't have any of her underlings or equipments with her. There were other evidences that also pointed towards this conclusion. However, there was one decisive fact that gave the most credence to this conclusion.

The Demon world's greatest chef would never send a midboss so early in the process!

'Should I have ignored her? No, she would have found me once I decided to stay in this city.'

Of course, his opponents couldn't find out he was a hero unless they had the help of a high ranking priest. However, it was also true that Artpe couldn't hide his massive reservoir of magical energy.

She was at the pinnacle of the Demon race, so she probably realized how talented he was as a mage. It really was something annoying, but the meeting between them was inevitable.

'I have to get out of here without raising any suspicions. I have to come up with an idea. I have to think... '

"I... if you aren't with anyone, would you like to go have a drink with me?"

“...ehng?”

Artpe had been very tense, but he came back to his senses at that moment. No matter how he thought about it, she was using a line to pick him up. When he looked at her expression, he realized, she wasn't paying attention to his magical energy. She was focused on Artpe himself!

“No, I'm here with my girlfriends.”

While Artpe lived with Maetel and Sienna, he had become proficient at deftly turning aside their pursuit of him. He had instinctively turned down Etna. It was too late by the time he realized what he had done. He came to his senses, but Etna already had a sullen expression on her face.

“Is that so...? Women theses days have great eyes. They already placed dibs on you despite you being so young...”

‘It seems she thinks I'm young...’

If she hadn't been one of the Four Heavenly king, she could have been the waitress A of the neighborhood's pub. This was how friendly she was towards humans. Even in his past life, she had been very attractive, so she was easily able to make a favorable impression on others. Moreover, she had an outgoing and sociable personality. This was why she had been given periodic assignments to scout the human world on top of her own heavy responsibilities.

‘Once I start thinking about my past life, the memories are endless. She isn't the Etna from my previous life. I wanted to focus on this present life, so she is the number one person I had to avoid... Shit.’

“I do have a moment.”

“Huh?”

She was in low spirits as she turned away from him. Artpe could have left Etna's desolate figure alone. However, he thought it would be a great opportunity to be able to gather information about the current Demon King's army from her. He couldn't miss out on this opportunity, so he stopped her.

“A cup of tea should be fine. This is my first time visiting Frate, so it would be great if

you could tell me about this place.”

“...ah.”

The beautiful woman’s expression had been filled with disappointment, but now a smile blossomed on her face. How could she show her feelings so overtly? It was a wonder.

Etna didn’t realize Artpe was already viewing her as a half idiot. She had on a bright expression as she spoke.

“Yes, you should leave it to me. I’ll tell you everything!”

She was the past and current Four Heavenly King. He was the former Four Heavenly King turned into the current hero. It was the start of a weird couple’s date.

Both of them had already done a cursory search of their surrounding. Soon, they decided to head towards a nearby pub.

The pub would have alcohol and other types of beverages. There would be no better place to talk, since they would be within a crowd of people.

“The auction that occurs periodically in Frate is called Frate’s Festival. The size of the people gathered here, and the various specialty items and artifacts that shows up here makes everyone go wild for this festival.”

“So are you here to participate in the auction?”

“Yes. Ah, you can call me Etna.”

Etna told him her real name as a Demon. She acted as if it wasn’t a big deal. If all Demons were as innocent as her, Artpe thought the Demon King would have been killed at the outset.

“I’m Artpe.”

Since she told him her real name, Artpe did the same. First, Artpe wasn’t a rare name in this world. The second reason being it would raise major red flags later on if she discovered he had given her a fake name.

“Oh my. Even your name is cute.”

“You should continue with your explanation. In truth, I just heard from the innkeeper that it has been 3 years since the last festival.”

“You do know that the Diaz Kingdom was in turmoil recently? That turmoil has died down somewhat, so Frate’s Festival was recommenced. When the kingship of the Diaz kingdom changed hands, the humans followed the king’s example. They went nuts as they shed a massive amount of each other’s blood. Naturally, in the process...”

Countless legends were born during this time period, and a curse had spread within the kingdom. On top of that, the Artifacts became strengthened. Humans, monsters, Demons and even Artifacts consumed the records of others to grow.

“So you are saying all those Artifacts will show up here to be auctioned.”

“Exactly. These items were reborn through the blood of the people. The people who made such horrors will gather here in excitement...”

It was called a festival. He didn’t know who made up the name, but he had a great sense for naming it that way. Artpe and Etna shared a bitter laugh. It was as if they’ve promised beforehand to laugh at the same time.

She smacked her lips as she asked him a question once again.

“Do you want to have a drink?”

“I really want to, but I’m still underaged.”

“Then I’ll be the only one drinking. One beer!”

He was 14 years old, but his outer appearance didn’t fit his age. He looked pretty mature for his age. Still, he had a youthful face, so he couldn’t boldly order alcohol for himself.

While Artpe became shy about drinking alcohol, Etna tried to down the alcoholic beverage she ordered in a refreshing manner... She tried.

“Ooh-ehhhk. It’s warm.”

She blanched as she put it back on the table. It hadn't been her intention, but her action evoked another memory from Artpe's past life.

'She's the youngest daughter of the Phoenix, and she had been blessed by hell fire. She was the pure one amongst the thieves. All flames obey her, but this means the cold rejects her... '

Anything she grabbed started to heat up. This was why she went looking for cold things throughout the year. This was also why he had gifted her an ice sculpture in his prior life. The ice had originated from the first winter of this world. It alleviated her need a little bit.

Of course, he hadn't given her the present, because he had liked her. He had wanted another Four Heavenly King as an ally. However, the gift had been a little bit too effective. It was one of the choices Artpe had made that he always regretted.

She had misunderstood his intentions. Her affection towards him became much more intense when she thought he had liked her... It also meant that 'his' jealousy had also intensified.

"The alcohol is too warm!"

"No way. Our beverages are very cool and refreshing!"

When she voiced her complaint, one of the waitress got angry with her. At that moment, Artpe smirked as he placed his hand on her cup. A faint light sparkled, and in the next instant, frost covered her cup.

"Uh...?"

"It'll last until you drink it."

"No way... Uh?"

When Etna put her lips on the cup, she became surprised. Her scorching magical energy was still being transmitted into the metal cup, but a cold energy from the cup was neutralizing the heat.

While the heat and the coldness fought a tug of war, her alcohol maintained a cool temperature. It flowed down Etna's throat.

“Oh my...”

Etna felt the cold alcohol travel down her throat, and it elicited a deep smile on her face. She moved her face towards the still beaming face of Artpe. Her voice hardened slightly.

“You aren’t going to hide what you are?”

“I felt a powerful magical energy from you. It was strong enough to make it hard for me to breathe, so I know you are a higher caliber of magician compared to me. I’m sure you are able to see me more clearly than I see you. So what would I accomplish by hiding what I’m capable of?”

It wasn’t just that fact. He knew Etna was level 376, and she was the commander for the army of thieves. She was also one of the Four Heavenly Kings from the Demon King’s army. He knew all of it.

Despite all the knowledge he possessed, Artpe was exceedingly excellent when compared to those his age. He was weaker than her. This was why he decided to act like a magician that was naive about the outside world. He planned on being faithful to this role. He activated a skill he developed as the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly kings. He activated his Method Acting skill.

“Didn’t Etna approach me because of that? You got close to me after seeing my magical energy, right?”

“Uh? Ah, uh. Huh? Yes!”

He made up a valid reason for her. He gave her an out where she would be able to justify her own actions. However, she had become flustered by his words. It was a very cute sight where it did not befit her age. Still, Artpe wasn’t into older women, so it had no effect on him! He drank the lemonade in front of him as he waited for her to calm down.

“Yes, your magical energy is absurdly outstanding compared to those your age! That is why I was surprised. Yes!”

“Fortunately, it seems you don’t plan on bullying me after learning that information.”

“There is no way I would have bullied you! Never!”

The surprised Etna started waving both her hands in denial. Even in his past life, Etna had avoided taking a single human life unless she was explicitly given a command by the Demon King. He was confident that she didn't hold any evil intent towards him. Still, he had asked the question as part of a plan! He was trying to exploit a weakness with his next attack!

"Please I hope you understand where I'm coming from. Suddenly, a strong and pretty noona like Etna approached me. Isn't it unreasonable to expect me to not to be on my guard."

When she heard his words, Etna's smile stretched from ear to ear.

That's right! She was weak against flattery!

She kept grinning as she nodded her head.

"I'm not bothered by it at all. It's fine. Yes, I just thought Artpe was coo... I had a favorable impression of you! Of course, age and skill doesn't always match up. Still, it doesn't matter how talented you are. You've reached a stage that can't be reached unless you go through several life-or-death crisis. I just thought that was incredible..."

"You look young to me, Etna."

"Hee..."

Naturally, Artpe enacted a second wave of flattery. He didn't even need to see the result. It was a critical hit.

"Is that so? I look young. Mmm. Ooh-mmm."

It didn't matter if it was a human or a demon. After a certain age, the ultimate compliment that could be given to a woman was that she looked young! The effect of this phrase was amazing! Her weakness had been assaulted, and the gap in Etna's defense was revealed!

Etna was so happy that she didn't know what to do with herself. Artpe's emotion remained cold as he watched her. He was using all kinds of methods to avoid becoming suspicious to her, and he was buying her good will. He was going to use the advantage he gained to acquire first hand knowledge about the Demon King's army. This was the only thought going through his head.

“So you really just talked to me out of curiosity?”

“Yes, that’s right... of course.”

...huh? He thought he saw a single cloud cross her constantly smiling face.

Was he mistaken?

He tilted his head in puzzlement as he continued his conversation with Etna. He had to find out what had caused the conflict of emotion on Etna’s face, so he had to keep her here as long as possible.

“All right. I’ll put my trust in you. So you should tell me about other sights worth seeing in Frate.”

“Yes, I will... By the way, if I order another beverage, will you cast another spell to keep it cool for me?”

“Of course.”

“Thank you! I want another glass of highball!”

At Artpe’s assertion, a smile akin to a full moon was plastered on Etna’s face.

He had done something so simple, yet she was truly happy. She really wasn’t fit for the role of the Four Heavenly King. He let out a bitter laugh inside as he faced her.

Her mouth opened easily.

“If we are talking about what you should do in the harbor town...”

Around two hours passed from that point.

Their conversation started with Frate, but their conversation naturally moved onto other topics. Etna didn’t talk about the specifics of her circumstances to Artpe. Still, she talked about her everyday life, and she talked about stories that was reminiscent of what happened in their past lives.

Of course, he already knew her identity, so it was easy for him to decipher the current situation of the Demon King’s army through her stories.

'It seems there isn't another Artpe in the Demon king's army. I'm sure about that.'

He had wonder if there would be another existence like Artpe, but with a different name. He also wondered if there was someone different with the same name as him. Neither case was true. It seemed no one in the Demon world was given the same position as what he was given in his previous life. Moreover, there was no one who had possessed a similar ability as his.

He also learned something knew. Unlike Etna's ranking in her previous life, she was ranked 3rd amongst the Four Heavenly Kings.

She mentioned three beings that were above her. He was sure by the speech and behavior she describe that two of the three was the Demon King and 'him'. It was the being that was ranked number one in his previous life. The remaining third figure must be the other Four Heavenly King!

'My existence was completely erased. However, it seems someone else was inserted as the new Four Heavenly King in my place. I wonder who it is? It was someone that was able to reach a higher rank than Etna. It seems nothing is turning out like my previous life.'

Of course, he couldn't ask her more detailed questions. It would basically reveal the fact that Artpe knew Etna was a Demon, and that she was one of the Four Heavenly Kings. Instead, he let out a laugh befitting his age as he spoke his next words.

"Etna, you are so strong, yet there are others that are stronger than you? I don't know which country's magic tower you are from, but it interests me."

"I'm not from a normal place. It is as you've said. I'm strong, but there are others that are stronger than me... It isn't a place where a person with a normal heart cannot survive."

Etna's voice was as serious as it could be. When he heard her words, Artpe couldn't hold back a sigh.

It was something he had repeatedly felt in his past life, but he couldn't believe how lax this woman was. If he wasn't careful, she would probably reveal that she was from the Demon world by mistake.

Artpe tried very hard not to dig any deeper into Etna's words. He was barely able to

focus the topic on her.

He could see the anguish she had possessed from the moment she was dominated by the Demon King to the last moment he had died in his previous life. It was so clear to him that it was as if he could grasp them with his hand. He didn't know it, because of his Read All Creation ability. The anguish she was feeling was similar to what he had felt in his previous life.

Maybe, that precipitated it.

He gave up on trying to act like a child. He spoke with words that held a good amount of his true feelings.

"There aren't that many that is special from the beginning. One starts out with a normal heart, but it gets continuously chipped away by one's environment. In the end, it takes on a shape that looks special to other people. Others may think it is special... In truth, it is something that is egregious hurtful and sad."

"Oh my."

Etna's eyes turned round in surprise when she heard his words. Then she started chuckling. Her expression looked as if she had been sucker punched. Artpe realized he had made a very serious mistake.

He might have made a mistake that exceeded the ice sculpture he had gifted her in his past life.

"You are an angel sent from the heavens to soothe my heart. What should I do? I'm conflicted. Should I just wrap you up and take you away with me?"

"Please refrain from doing so. You will make my girlfriends cry."

"...yes, I'll refrain. However, when I meet you again, I really might not be able to hold myself back."

As she spoke those words, she got up from her seat. Her chest sensually jiggled, and every male eyes were on her. Her chest was large enough that it made one wonder if they were a burden to her slender body. Of course, Artpe was unfazed.

He was unfazed.

"Artpe, I went through the effort of talking you about Frate, so I'm sorry about this."

"H... huh?"

"I want you to leave this city as soon as possible. You should do so with your precious girlfriend."

"What?"

"Goodbye for now."

Her last farewell contained a teaspoon of regret, and two teaspoons of anticipation. Artpe knew she had a secret she was keeping. Etna didn't say anything further as she suddenly disappeared from her sesat.

Since she hadn't left the city, Artpe could find her with his ability. However, he didn't feel the need to do so. He had heard everything he needed to hear.

'She wants me to leave the city? That means Etna hadn't come here for sight seeing. That can't be. There is no way the Demon King would use her at this juncture in time. This city doesn't have any weird items or people. Maybe, it has something to do with something on one of the boats that will influx into the city... '

However, Artpe couldn't continue down that train of thought. He was so inwardly focused that he hadn't been able to properly activate his Read All Creation ability. This was why he didn't notice the two people that had moved stealthily towards him.

"Artpe!"

"Oppa, where did you go by yourself?"

These rascals... He was sure that their inability to move stealthily had all been an act. Artpe let out a big sigh as he got up from his seat.

"Can't I spend some quality time alone?"

"Then why is there a cup on the other side? Ah, I also smell a sweet citrus type perfume! Woman! It was a woman!"

"Wow. Unni is amazing!"

Maetel made a sharp observation. At such times, she didn't seem dumb. She even showed qualities that would make her a great detective. Artpe absent-mindedly had such thoughts as he was interrogated under the clutches of Maetel.

Of course, he had no intention of leaving Frate.

This stage would truly be his from now on.

Chapter 50

Frate's Festival (3)

Artpe had died. His life had come to a absolute end when he had been stabbed by the thief's dagger.

The thief clicked his tongue. He retrieved his dagger as he let out a sigh. The hero looked on with dazed eyes as she spoke with a voice devoid of strength.

“Silpennon... Why...”

“There is no way that man had any intentions of coming to our side. He’s our enemy. We have to kill our enemies. It will endanger you If you hesitate.”

“No. That isn’t it. That can’t be true, because he...”

Before she could continue her words, the Mana in the atmosphere started to burn up in flame.

The magician had already sensed their enemy approaching, so she had quickly thrust her staff forward to cast a defensive spell.

However, the enemy’s Mana exceeded what the mage could block. In the end, the hero’s party all suffered from burns. The warrior acted tough by crushing a potion bottle with his hand, and he splashed it over the party to heal them.

“Unforgivable.”

A seething yet earnest voice of a woman rang out from the top of the castle wall.

“You bastards... There is no way... I won’t forgive you.”

“F... Four Heavenly King.”

“Fire Witch Etna!? He really called her here!”

“Look, Maetel! That bastard never intended to side with the humans!”

The warrior was appalled, and the thief yelled out as he grinded his teeth.

However, the hero no longer heeded their words. The only thing she had eyes for was the sight of the witch clutching the corpse of Artpe. She easily pushed aside the thief with the brush of her hand.

There was a deep blood colored flame surrounding the entire body of the witch. However, it couldn't evaporate the tears that were falling from eyes.

“How dare you do this to my Artpe. He was my only remaining hope, yet you guys...!”

“How laughable, witch! You've killed thousands to hundred thousands of humans. You've ended the lives of family members and lovers!”

“We are past the point where we can persuade her with logic. Everyone raise your magical energy. Let us kill our enemy.”

The hero had become despondent at Artpe's death, so the archer calmly tried to lead the party. The archer had an arrow drawn back, and there was a thick cold energy hovering around the tip of the arrow.

The witch possessed extremely strong power of fire. This was also why her weakness was the most well defined amongst the Four Heavenly Kings. Even though she was a much more powerful exististance than the Four Heavenly King they had just defeated, there was a chance that they could win against her.

“Please help, Regina.”

“Yes.”

The mage calmly nodded her head, and she started chanting her spell. Despite them being overwhelmed by the witch's spirit, the fight would start now. She had trained too much as a magician to give up and back off so early in the fight.

Instead of changing the nature around her, she changed herself to be closest to ice. She reinforced the change as she created a new technique to resist against the heat. Then she placed the blessing of the Winter Queen on the members of the hero's party. It especially strengthened the cold energy placed on the archer's arrow to the extreme.

However...

"Ridiculous. How laughable! You cannot endure my wrath with just the blessing of the Winter Queen. You would have to bring the Winter Queen here if you want to do that!"

While she clutched Artpe to her, the Witch started to unleash a torrent of her power. It was as if she controlled all the flames of this world. From the depths much deeper than the foundation of the castle wall, magma started erupting from the ground. The magma quickly covered several hundred meters to hit the hero's party.

The heat emanating from Etna spread to the entire castle wall. In a flash, the whole region turned into a magma field. The party barely had enough ground to stand on. The sky was thick with clouds, yet it started to part. The gray colored sun of the Demon world appeared from between the clouds as the sunlight created a pillar of fire.

Several hundred thousand Fire Spirits cackled as they revealed themselves.

"Koohk. That monster"

"We'll win this."

The thief let out a curse, and the magician calmly made a declaration. Her words were echoed by the members of the hero's party, and it buoyed their power.

"It is too hot. I can't approach her."

"You idiot. You should take off that can of an armor."

"I can't take this armor off. It is cursed."

"...who did it?"

The hero's party was trying to resist the heat in one way or another as they got into formation. The witch quietly opened her mouth. There were enormous fireballs floating around her. Dozens, hundreds, thousands, hundred thousands... They floated into the air to assault the hero's party.

"Who killed Artpe?"

"It was me, witch!"

“...no.”

Finally, the hero took a small step forward at that moment.

She had barely been able to steady her wavering eyes. Strength returned to the sword she was gripping.

“I’m the one that killed Artpe Hirtana Kelduke.”

“...you did, hero?”

The witch twisted her mouth. She had lost Artpe, and things couldn’t go back to how it was. The violent flames matched her anger as it swirled around her body.

“Yes, I wanted it to be you. I wanted it to be you, so that I can hate without reservation.”

All the Fire Spirits turned to look at the hero. It was as if half of the world was against her, but the hero calmly opened her mouth in front of such a sight.

“He wanted me to tell you something at the end...”

“What did Artpe say! What was his last words!”

“He said he doesn’t particular like older women.”

“What...?”

The hero had a small smile on her face. It was a smile that was holding back her tears.

“It seems you are a bit slow. You were ditched.”

“...hoo, hoo-hoo.”

Surprisingly, the witch Etna laughed when she heard the hero’s words. For a brief moment, the anger of the Flame Spirits lessened a little bit.

“Artpe, you idiot. I already knew that from the beginning. You should have left some other words behind, you dummy...”

“You...”

Etna quickly stole a hand towards her eyes to wipe at her remaining tears. Then all the Fire Spirits gathered to revolve around her arms.

"In the end, it was me. In his last moments, he thought about me. Yes, that in itself makes me happy. That is why..."

The flames exploded.

The daughter of the Phoenix gave a proclamation.

"I'll send you all to a painless death. It will only take an instant."

"Bring it on!"

The hero also wiped away the remaining tears from her eyes. She flawlessly entered into her battle mode. She bravely charged towards the flame. The warrior and the thief followed behind her. The mage lifted her staff, and the archer notched another arrow.

The victor of the battle was the hero.

"..."

"Ah."

Artpe slowly opened his eyes. Maetel's face was close enough where their noses were about to touch. Maetel's eyes were round as she kept puckering her lips. She was slowly narrowing the distance between him and her. The Mana String appeared out of nowhere, and it impacted on her forehead. She pulled away in pain.

"You are too much, Artpe!"

"Ah."

Artpe ignored her as he replayed the scene he saw within his dream. In front of Artpe's death, the Witch of Flame Etna had gone berserk. Then there was the hero Maetel. She refused to back down as she charged forward with a sad smile on her face.

This was obvious, but he didn't remember seeing such a sight. If he did, it meant Artpe was an Undead.

'Was it really what happened after I died... There's no way that can be true.'

After Artpe had died, his Read All Creation ability had immediately sent him into the past. This was why there was no way he possessed the memory of what happened after his death.

It had been a very long time since he had met Etna. Maybe he had created a dream with her personality and actions as a basis. He decided to accept that theory as the truth.

It was merely a false dream, yet he couldn't easily forget what he had seen.

Etna's scream continued to ring inside his head.

'I was her last remaining hope... If she herself told me that at the time, I might have fallen for her. I was also exhausted by everything at the time like her.'

It seemed his meeting with Etna had been a shock to his system. He kept telling himself that he hadn't liked her, but he might still have some lingering feelings left for Etna.

'Even if I do have some feelings for her, I have to throw it away. I won't have to fight her right now, but since a madman like the Demon King still exists, I'll eventually have to face her. I'll be in a similar situation as what I saw in the dream today...'

A bitter smile automatically formed on his lips. On his opposite side, Sienna was still sleeping as she grabbed onto him. She mumbled in her sleep as she tried to find Artpe's body heat again. He put the blanket over her, and he got out of bed. Maetel had woken up early like Artpe. She got up from the bed as she asked him a question.

"Artpe, what are you going to do today?"

"Originally, I planned on sightseeing various locations, and I wanted to participate in the auction... Still, I don't think things will turn out so well like that."

He inferred it from what Etna had said to him yesterday. The Demons had inflicted a curse on the human world a year ago. It seemed the stage for the second assault on the human world would occur in Frate. He had no idea why, but the Demon King's army always seemed to show up in the path of the hero. Still, he didn't plan on running away now that he knew something was going to happen here.

'In the first plan hatched by the Demon King's army, the highest level opponent was level 100. Even if they hatched two or more secret schemes in the past year, the one in charge of this plan should be around level 150. The variable here is the Four Heavenly King Etna. It seems she's aware of the plan, but the chances of her participating in the plan is low. I can say that with 100% surety.'

Why?

This was the Demon King's style. If the Demon King wasn't such an unreasonable idiot, the human world would have already been wiped out from the outset. In terms of magical energy and martial prowess, the human world couldn't hold a candle to the Demon world.

'Still, Etna already had a rough idea of how much magical energy I possessed, yet she told me to get out of the city. Mmmm. If I see myself as an outside observer, I would judge myself to be around level 300.'

Of course, he didn't have any proper area of effect magic spells. His magical energy was really high compared to his level, but his true skill level was well below that of a level 300 magician. However, from the outside, he would look like a level 300 mage. This fact was important. It would allow him to use one of the indispensable skills of the Four Heavenly King. He would be able to use his Bluff skill.

'I don't think the Demon world would have invested a strong enough force to be able to stop a level 300 magician...'

This meant there was only one answer left.

"They'll invade in a manner that would make one feel dirty just observing it."

Artpe furrowed his brows as he thought about the experiments in Diaz. They had tried to turn humans into Demons. From the start to the completion of the Quest, Artpe's party had never been in danger. However, the Quest had been annoying, and it had done a lot of damage to the psyche of everyone involved.

He assumed it would be the same this time around. It seemed the Demon King was using a significantly different approach compared to his previous life. He was using a method that would put Artpe in the foulest of moods.

"Eh-eet."

"Hey."

At that moment, Maetel had seen him frown. Maetel spoke as she grabbed his cheeks. She kneaded it as if his cheeks were clay. She tried to get his face to relax.

"Don't worry too much, Artpe. It doesn't matter what happens. I'll protect Artpe."

"It isn't me I'm worried about. Other people will be in danger."

"Then I'll save those people!"

She was second to none in the human race in terms of being dependable. It was also true that he felt much better at her boasts. Artpe smirked as he petted her head.

"Yes, I'll put my trust in you, hero-nim."

"Yes, you should trust only in me!"

That's right. Artpe and Maetel were heroes, who possessed Innate abilities. Thanks to Etna he was able to get a basic idea on what might occur here.

If he had the time to worry, it meant he should use that time to better use. It would be more productive to make preparations.

'All right. First things first... '

If he was to point out what troubled him the most, the first thing to come mind was the curse.

It could make people act crazy. It could spread a disease. It could turn the water foul.

All of this could arise from cursed Mana.

He was absolutely certain that a curse was included in the plan of the Demon King's army.

Thankfully, Artpe had a method of defeating curses. It was the Obsidian of Greed, which had turned into a first grade item during the first Quest.

If he used it in conjunction with his Read All Creation ability, he would be able to

extract curses. It didn't matter if the curse had been activated or not. It possessed a cheat-like ability.

There was still a good amount of wiggle room before the Obsidian would be upgraded into S Rank. If this venture wasn't enough to push the Obsidian into the next rank, he could use his Reinforcement spell to advance the Obsidian. He had trained the Reinforcement spell as much as the other spells for the past year, and it had reached level 43.

"If I have this, all curses will... Uh?"

He had used his Read All Creation ability to frequently check his surrounding, but he hadn't checked anything within his clothes. He finally realized a serious change had occurred within his robe.

"It's not here?"

"What's not there, Artpe? Hesitation?"

"I don't have scruples in the first place."

"Your love for older women?"

"I never had that in the first place."

"Then why won't you kiss me!"

He pushed the hero far away, since she was pestering him. Then he conducted a thorough search of his robe, yet he couldn't find the Obsidian of Greed. The only thing to come out from his robe was the Demite's Gemstone, which had refined about 1/50 of itself, and the Chaos Egg.

No, it was no longer the Chaos Egg.

[Beast of Greed's Egg]

[From within the chaos, it had combined with a cursed item. It created the Beast's Egg, which is waiting to be born. It covets all negative energy, so it might hatch immediately if negative energy is provided.]

“...ah.”

“Huh? Isn’t this Artpe and my love’s...”

“If this is the fruit of our love, I don’t want such a love...”

“You are too much!”

Artpe finally realized the reason behind the disappearance of his Obsidian of Greed. However, he couldn’t ask the egg why it had eaten the obsidian. He let out a short sigh as he raised the communication device.

“Uh, ajumma... Do you have artifacts, potions, or items that originated from evil...?”

Since he couldn’t ask the question to the egg, he had no choice but to ask it when the being inside egg was hatched.

Chapter 51

Frate's Festival (4)

[Customer, I told you you just have to find the nearest branch of Anywhere company. Jeez... If you just wanted to hear my voice, you didn't have to come up with such a strange request. I would have picked up the call. Of course, I would do so if you paid me a bronze coin per second!!]

“We are currently at Frate.”

[Huh...?]

It was as if he could see Mycenae tilt her head in puzzlement by the tone of her voice. Artpe smirked as he continued to speak.

“Ajumma, you are in Frate right now. Right?”

[Huhk. How did you...]

Obviously, he had thoroughly searched Frate yesterday, and in the process, he became aware of everyone that resided within the city. He didn't have to remember the record of strangers, but when he did find someone he knew, there was no way he would forget that person.

[How did you know that!? It seems you are pretty good at stalking too!]

“Stop spouting nonsense. You should ready the items I need then you should contact me. I'll be waiting for you to contact me.”

[Aht. Wait a moment, customer...]

Artpe ended the transmission, and he got up with a refreshed feeling in his heart. Maetel was giving him an odd look, but he knew she was going to start spouting some nonsense. He decided to ignore it.

“I'll be a bit busy going around the city. Will you be ok?”

“Yes, I’m not tired at all.”

It was to be expected. If a city could bottom out Maetel’s stamina, it probably shouldn’t be called a city.

“All right. Let’s wake up Sienna, then we can head down.”

“Isn’t Sienna still too young? Since we will be doing something arduous, let’s let Sienna rest. The two of us can do it.”

A ridiculously thoughtful words had come out of Maetel’s mouth. However, Artpe knew why she was saying such words. Arte let out a sigh as she flicked Maetel’s forehead.

“Ah-yaht.”

“Even if I sent out Sienna by herself, she would be able to take care of most of what we are going to do today by herself. So you don’t have to worry about it being too tough for her.”

“Artpe is an idiot who doesn’t know how I feel!”

The three of them ate soup and bread before they went out into the streets.

Artpe already knew the lay of the land, and he knew about the population residing within the city. The information was registered in his mind when he explored the city yesterday. Now he just had to gather information regarding the additional people that will come into the city. He also had to find where the trouble would start today within the city while gathering the items he wanted to acquire.

“Huhk.”

“Look at those women.”

“They still look very young. What is the world coming to?”

It was as the innkeeper had warned. When the three of them walked the streets, everyone’s gazes were on them. They appropriately took the precaution of wearing a hood, yet it hadn’t mattered.

"Oppa."

"Heek. Why are they all staring at us?"

Sienna and Maetel were tense as they stuck close to Artpe. At this point, Artpe had no idea if they were sticking close to him, because they were afraid or they just wanted skinship.

Maetel tried to keep Sienna in check by acting this way, but she was becoming a role model for Sienna on how to act around Artpe.

Did she realize this fact?

If someone saw them, they would think they were sisters. Then there was Artpe, who was between them...

Of course, he would receive disapproving gazes.

Artpe desperately wanted a male member to join his party as soon as possible, but when he thought about the past hero's party, he knew it was a dream that would be hard to achieve. His only salvation was Silpennon, but for some reason, Maetel hated Silpennon as if he was a bitter foe...

He let out a sigh as he reassured them.

"It's all right. I'm pretty sure not many people will approach us."

Of course, it was true that it was hard to hide the appearance of the party members with a robe and a hood, but that wasn't the only reason why they were the focus of everyone's attention.

Maetel had two swords hanging from her waist, and Sienna had the Sledge Hammer strapped to her back as her main weapon. They were intimidating for most people on the streets.

It was said that beautiful flowers had thorns.

When the men saw the especially large thorns in the form of a hammer and long sword, no one was brave enough to approach the girls. Even if someone approached them, they would show the men the taste of their thorns.

"I did a cursory search of this place, and according to a reliable informant, something will happen here today. Let's nip that in the bud, so we can enjoy the auction. That is our main goal."

"An informant you trust..."

Maetel had a sullen expression on her face. It seemed the citrus perfume from the day before still worried her. Artpe stroke her head as he soothed her.

"When we meet that trustworthy informant again, there is a high probability that she'll be an enemy. That is why you don't have to worry about her."

"It isn't as if you can't fall in love with an enemy..."

"You don't have much free time, yet you seem to be crafting a pretty decent novel."

"I... I'm ok with having one more unni."

At what point did their education go wrong? Artpe let out a sigh as he created his Mana Strings. He didn't do a widespread search like yesterday. He expended a small amount of Mana, but at the same time, he increased the efficiency of his search. However, it was a fruitless effort.

"There are a lot of ships docked at the harbor."

"The really rare items should be coming in today. They aren't just coming over the ocean. They'll be traveling here over land, and the Dungeon Merchants will be using their Teleportation magic."

It would be disappointing if the Dungeon Merchants didn't participate in such a large auction. They mainly traded within the Dungeon, but the Frate's Festival was a market they couldn't ignore. They could sell the loot they acquired in Dungeons at an exorbitant amount of price, and it was a great opportunity for them to stock up on items that would be required by adventurers, who explored the Dungeons.

"This is why Mycenae is here too. She's probably choosing which items she wants to put up for auction."

[Customer?]

Mycenae contacted him at the exact moment when he talked about her. He wondered if maybe she was the one stalking him. He was a bit nervous as he raised the communication device to answer her.

“What?”

[As a veteran merchant, I've rarely had to say these words... However, I think it'll be a bit tough for me to acquire those items.]

“Are you really a veteran merchant, ajumma?”

[You really are able to say such rude words without batting an eye! However... Koo-ooooooh.]

After a brief amount of time had passed, she spoke with a voice drained of energy.

[The artifacts and the potions of evil origins are strangely out of stock. I contacted the headquarters, and they are also out. Usually, such foul items have a limited market... Even the really useless ones have all been sold. However, the really powerful ones are being auctioned today... Ah. The Death Knight's helmet, and the Blood Gold Halberd I purchased from you will be auctioned today!]

“Ajumma, you are my exclusive merchant, yet you aren't being of much help to me. Shall we nullify the contract?”

[If you really need such evil artifacts, you can purchase them at auction! There will be a lot coming out today!]

“There is a high probability that something will occur at the time of the auction.”

Artped didn't give any additional explanation to her. Instead, he asked her a question.

“So do you have items like the Obsidian of Greed?”

[...oh my. The timing of your request is quite strange. All the Dungeon companies including the Anywhere company is out of that item.]

When he heard those words, a lightning struck within his head.

“...could you repeat that?”

[All the companies are out of the Obsidian of Greed. The companies gradually ran out in order. Yesterday, the last two Obsidian left in the Anywhere company was sold. I don't know who bought it, but they paid a premium price for them. They purchased each of them for the obscene price of 10,000 gold.]

Artpe thought about it. This meant that he didn't have to make preparations for other possibilities.

No matter how he thought about it, it seemed the main plan of the Demon King's army was to use a curse!

Shit! No wonder!

Since the plan had failed last time, the Demon King's army must have done a thorough analysis on why their plan had failed. Now they had gotten rid of the main component that had interfered with their plan!

It was a very cute tactic!

'The number of artifacts with evil origins is abnormally in demand. The curse has to be connected to the items. This means it might be a curse related to a human's greed, and the desire to slaughter others. No, wait a second. Now that I think about it... '

Artpe recalled the conversation he had with Etna yesterday. What was the topic they discussed with each other?

She said the Frate's Festival was being held after a 3 year hiatus. Didn't she say the artifacts that were strengthened through blood and tears shed in Diaz would be featured as part of this event?

Artpe had brought up the topic first, and the flow of the conversation had been very natural. This was why he hadn't paid much attention to it. However, he remembered that she kept sighing as she showed regret when discussing the topic.

If so, the underlying cause of her behavior hadn't simply been about what she had experienced up until now in Diaz. It was an emotion born out of knowing the plan that was being hatched here. He had thought her behavior arose, because she was overly humane. However, this new theory was more compelling to him.

All the cursed, lamenting and evil artifacts were gathered in this festival. Then there

was the curse prepared by the Demon king's army...

"The thing that immediately comes to mind is the strengthening of a curse. Or maybe it might be a charm. Either way it'll rile up the emotions of the people. If it activates within this city full of desire..."'

The only thing that would arrive would be a festival of death and madness. The people excited about the revitalization of Diaz's economy would all tremble in fear.

Since the plan had exquisite timing, he couldn't tackle it. Artpe wanted to compliment the Demon King's army, since they outdid themselves this time.

However, he would have done so only if he still held the position of Four Heavenly King!

[Customer? Customer? Please answer me! You have the honor of being able to talk to me directly, yet you seem to not realize the worth of having such an access!]

"Thank you for the good information, ajumma."

[I'm not an ajumma! Please call me Mycena!]

"Mycena."

[Oh my...]

Mycena's voice immediately melted.

[Look at how nice that is.]

"Since I've received good information from you, I'll give you a good piece of information to you as a bonus."

[Oh my. You are even able to abide by the ethics of commerce.]

"You should withdraw all the items you submitted for today's auction."

[You tricked me, you charlatan!]

"I warned you."

Artpe ended the connection. It was up to her to make her own choices and actions now. The only thing that was important to him right now was finding a way to stop the disaster that was going to occur today using the information he just learned right now.

“Etna said I should get out of the city as fast as possible.”

Maybe, this was Etna’s way of asking for help. Since she couldn’t go against the will of the Demon King, she had searched out Artpe, who had high amount of magical energy and knowledge. Maybe, she wanted him to recognize her secret signals, so he could stop the Demon King’s plan.

Maybe, he was reading too much into her actions.

It didn’t matter which scenario was true.

It didn’t change what Artpe had to do.

“Originally, I wanted to solve this in a lawful manner, but I have no choice now. Let’s go, Maetel and Sienna.”

“If you aren’t going to use a lawful method, how are you going to solve this, Artpe?”

Artpe grinned as he gave an answer.

“I’ll use the way of the hero.”

“The way of a hero is an illegal method!?”

“This is unexpected.”

Maetel replied in shock, and Sienna giggled.

Artpe ignored them as he valiantly walked forward.

His destination was already decided.

It was the main square of Frate. It was where the Frate’s Festival would take place. There would be countless people gathered there. It was where the artifacts and greed was all gathered.

The auction house would be at the center of the Demon King army's plan.

Chapter 52

Frate's Festival (5)

“Waaaa. There a lot of people here.”

“There are a lot of security too. It seems our job might not be as easy as I thought.”

At this point in time, all humans were focused on what was going on in Frate. Of course, a massive number of people would be gathering here at the auction located at the main square.

There were booths selling food that they had never heard of before, and there was a decent amount of vendors selling children’s toys. The eyes of Sienna and Maetel twinkled everytime they walked past a vendor. They looked like grown up young ladies on the outside, but at times like this, they were without a doubt still kids.

He had already expected it to be like this. He let out a sigh as he spoke.

“You guys can each pick out one thing you want to eat.”

“Ya-ho! I love you, Artpe!”

“Oppa, I want to eat those large candies!”

The hero and the Warrior Priestess started chewing on the candy-coated apple candies they bought from a vendor. They were quite innocent as they showed simple pleasure at eating the treats. Artpe took the precaution of trying not to draw attention of the people around them as he led the two girls towards the auction.

“Can anyone participate in the auction?”

“I heard a rumor that participation will be denied unless you can come up with at least 3,000 gold.”

“Three thousand gold! There must be amazing items being sold if we have to prepare 3,000 gold!”

An enormous public auction house had been constructed in the shape of a circle, and there were a lot of people milling around it. Even if someone was murdered with the auction house, he didn't think people would pay much attention to it. Artpe turned around to look at the dummies swinging and playing around with the stick that had held the candy...

"Eh-eet."

"Ooh-boohp."

Maetel had pushed the candy towards his mouth, so he decided to take a bite. It was a clean bite where the crunchy fruit within and the candy on the outside entered into his mouth. He tasted an almost unbearable amount of sweetness. However, that wasn't what was important here...

"This candy is cursed."

"Huh!?"

Sienna and Maetel expressed their shock at the same time. It was to be expected. The candy had been so delicious that they were each having a second helping. They had no idea something was wrong. Artpe gave a light blow to the heads of the two girls. They were looking at him with round eyes, so he gave an explanation.

"You are a hero, and you are an Evil Reflector, who's also a Priestess. Our existence itself gives us immunity from most curses. However, that doesn't mean you shouldn't keep an eye out for curses. You guys have to develop your senses."

"As expected, oppa is amazing..."

The curse was one of the ones he had assumed would show up. It was a curse that would cause rage and madness. It didn't matter how much one ate the food infused with the curse. For a fixed amount of time, the curse would stay hidden within the body, and it would only activate when a certain prerequisite was met.

Of course, the items that met this specific prerequisite were busily coming towards the auction house through various routes.

'Most of the vendors on this street are selling such products. Moreover, it is cleverly hidden, so one won't pick up on it unless one posses a decent detection skill. Even if

one became aware of it, it isn't something that can be easily dispelled. It is a very complicated curse... '

As expected, the situation was moving along in a way that he had predicted. The more important point was the fact that the curse of anger wasn't the only one spreading across the city.

If he just looked around right now, he could see the curse within food and drinks. There was even a curse spreading through air. There were all kinds of curse that amplified emotions, and there were ones that turned humans into monsters. He even saw one that weakened people through his Read All Creation ability.

It seemed they planned on taking over the whole city. By looking at the size of the plan, it seemed they started preparing for this plan as soon as the kingship exchanged hands.

Moreover, the hero's party arrived right when the large event was prepared to go off! It was to be expected.

Shit!

'However, I can't deny the fact that I'm able to move around more freely.'

Artpe waited for them to eat all their candies before he gave them an order.

"I want you guys to destroy this auction house right now. I want you to act crazy as if the curse of rage had been activated."

"...huh?"

The eyes of Sienna and Maetel turned round. However, Artpe repeated his instructions verbatim, so they knew they hadn't heard his words wrong. Maetel was taken aback, so she shouted out her words.

"That's a crime!"

"Moreover, that isn't something a hero should do."

"What kind of image do you actually associate with a hero!?"

Artpe didn't go out of his way to explain that part to them.

"I want you to make your appearances a little bit more indistinct with the artifacts. I want you guys to pretend fight, while destroying the auction house. However, I don't want you to make it seem you guys are intentionally destroying the place. You have to show no interest in the auction house. What do you think? It's easy, right?"

"..."

"...y... yes"

At such an absurd request, Maetel was at a loss for words. Sienna was barely able to answer him. Artpe continued his explanation.

"Currently, there aren't many people within the city that will be able to stop you guys, so you'll be able to cause a ruckus for a long time. People will solely pay attention to the two of you, and when you completely destroy the auction house, I'll be able to achieve my goal too. When I finish my work, I'll give you guys a singal. When that happens, you must get out of there without being detained."

"But, Artpe, wouldn't the auction be stalled if the auction house is destroyed?"

"Of course. However, if they use all the available resources, they'll have no trouble starting the auction on time."

"So what's the point of us destroying the auction house?"

"That is a very good question."

Artpe let out an evil laugh. He was holding the egg of the Greed beast that was waiting to be hatched. As if it could sense the curse in the air, the egg twitched. It was a pitiful sight.

"You'll find out soon enough."

There was an amazing amount of people gathered at the central square.

In the midst of them, Maetel's anger filled voice (she was acting) rang out.

"You thieving caaaaaaaaaat!"

What kind of intro was that!?

“It isn’t just one or two days. You are quite persistent in trying to get at my man! I can’t forgive you!”

“Koohk!”

Maetel’s powerful kick landed a direct hit on Sienna’s stomach. Sienna flew several dozen meters in the air before she impacted on the wall of the auction house.

“Kyahhhhhhk!”

“A... a person flew!”

“Run!”

The angle of her flight was beautiful. Miraculously, no one except Sienna was hurt. The impact was powerful enough to push the people crowded around the auction house backwards in fright.

“Dieeeeeeeeeee!”

Before the worried people could approach Sienna, Maetel came forth for a second round of attacks. Sienna didn’t even have time pick herself up before Maetel attacked.

She was gripping the enormous bastard sword with both hands, and she was focusing the strength of her entire body on that swing. Sienna was barely able to dodge it, and the bastard sword impacted on the wall of the auction house. The strength of the strike was transferred into the wall, and she easily toppled the wall.

“T... the auction house!”

“You are dodging like a little mouse!”

‘When did Maetel’s way of speech get so rough?!’

She’s acting, right?

After she indulged herself by making up a novel in her spare time, she gained this acting ability, right?

Please tell me I'm right!

Don't tell me she is pouring out her real feeling by exploiting this opportunity!

"Hoo. Unni is a real scaredy cat."

Maetel had made the entire city tremble in fear, and Sienna finally started her counterattack! She didn't care if the people around her retreated in fear. She planted her main Sledge Hammer on the ground as she grinned.

"It seems unni is really scared that oppa will fall for me."

"You...!"

"However, you do know that oppa likes younger women, right? Unni, you are already done. Oppa is mine now!"

'You guys are only 1 years apart!'

"I... I'll kill you...!"

Maetel finally activated her Berserk! At this point, she didn't care about the defenseless people or the auction. The soldiers and the fighters associated with the merchant association could only look on in fear!

"B... Berserk."

"She's a Berserker!"

"A Berserker's blind passion is making her fight! She is expressing it through physical violence!"

"This is the end! The city is ruined!"

"Koo-ahhhhhhhng!"

Maetel activated her Acceleration ability, and she charged forward at a crazy speed! Sienna desperately dodged the attack. Instead, another blameless wall of the auction house was hit by the bastard sword. It crumbled under the assault.

"Unni is acting this way, because you aren't confident in yourself. Aren't I right? Recently, I noticed oppa is laughing more for me than unni!"

Finally, Sienna let out her first attack! The Sledge Hammer was the ideal weapon when one wanted to destroy something. It was also under the influence of her destructive magical energy. The already large hammer became larger as she swung it!

"Hooht!"

There were few in the human world that could measure up to her speed, but she had lost her sense of reason through Berserk. This was why Sienna was able to dodge the attack easily, and the blameless auction house took the blow in her stead!

"At this rate, everyone within the auction house will die!"

"Stop yelling! You don't want to become the target of the Berserker!"

"S... someone go get the head of the auction house!"

"Dungeon Merchants... Where are the Dungeon Merchants!"

"Customer, we want 7,500 gold to intervene in this fight! Ah, no. We require 8,000 gold! We require 8,500 gold! T... this is idiotic! The cost needed to intervene is incalculable!?"

"How dare you!"

The place was a crucible of chaos. The people there wondered if this was how hell looks like. Shouts, screams and Mana was all mixed all in as everything in the surrounding was being destroyed!

"I... if it wasn't for you, it would have been just the two of us for the past year!"

"It isn't as if I want him only for myself, unni. You can share him a little bit! I want him too!"

"No...! He is mine! I won't give him up to anyone!"

Maetel and Sienna was speaking with such venom and anger that it was hard to think of it as acting. As they spat out their words, the bastard sword and the hammer were

swung at each other. Each blow narrowly missed each other's body every time. It only destroyed the blamess surrounding.

The officials of the auction were trembling with fear. The Dungeon Merchants, who were talented in magic and martial prowess, hesitated. They wondered if they could really stop this fight.

Then there was Artpe. He wondered if he should just abandon the plan before Maetel really killed Sienna. He was conflicted as to whether he should just retrieve and run with the two girls.

“I won’t forgive yooooooooooooou!”

“Kyahhhhhhkh!”

At some point in time, Maetel finally got in a critical hit. Sienna was kicked to the floor, and Maetel had stolen her Sledge Hammer. Maetel imbued a massive amount of Mana as she brought it down!

Sienna thought she really might die if things progressed any further. She desperately rolled on the ground to avoid the blow. Maetel’s hammer blow was magnificent. It destroyed the stage. The traces of an auction house was nowhere to be seen.

“H... huh, huhk.”

“That is a technique that can be learned by a small number of Berserkers called Earth Break...!”

It was just a normal Bash skill.

‘Since the moment I’ve been waiting for is here, I should do what I came here to do...’

Artpe had been watching the sight from afar, and he activated his magic as he had a heavy heart. He imbued his Mana String with stealth ability. It held tightly to the egg of the Greed Beast. When everyone’s attention was on Maetel and Sienna, he used that moment to secretly sneak in the egg.

He moved it towards the absolute center of auction house’s stage. It was where Maetel had made a big hole with her hellbent attack!

He made sure the egg was buried, and he put dirt over it.

His task ended perfectly.

“S... stop immediately! I... I order in the name of the l... lord, Count Melud!”

At that point, the one in charge of Frate finally stepped forward. He was a noble, yet his safety wasn't guaranteed. His legs were shaking, but he had shown up himself to stop the crazy girls.

It was admirable.

Artpe decided to give him high marks for it. Of course, the count himself didn't look too happy~

“Uh. Firework...?”

“Beautiful.”

As if he had been waiting for the lord to step forward, a pretty firework bloomed in the sky. Of course, it was a signal from Artpe that signified the success of his plan.

“Aht.”

“Ah...”

Maetel and Sienna was panting to gather their breath. They hesitated as they looked at the firework. Both girls clicked their tongue.

“Let's finish this somewhere else.”

“Hoong. Do you think unni will win just by changing the venue?”

The two left as they provoked each other until the end!

Of course, the power they displayed was so terrifying that no one dared to stop them. It was possible for Maetel, but there were a good number of people amongst the Dungeon Merchants that would be able to stop Sienna. However, they weren't going to intervene unless it was profitable for them. The Dungeon Merchants abstained from doing anything.

The two criminals successfully walked out from the scene of the crime!

"This... What the hell happened..."

"We were unlucky, lord. Of all places, those monsters decided to fight here..."

"How can a man be worth all of this!"

"It seems this person is receiving the love of those two women. I don't know who he is, but I'm jealous..."

"Jealous? It is obvious that man will suffer an early death."

"Koo-hmm. That..."

Artpe cleared his throat as he released his Stealth spell. He appeared in front of the lord. Of course, he still had his disguise on through his artifact.

As expected, everyone turned their attention to him. Artpe felt like dying from embarrassment, but he opened his mouth to speak.

"That is... They are my companions."

"You are the one receiving the love of those two women!?"

"Uh. That's..."

He was thankful that their fight had attracted attention away from him, but why the hell did they have to fight over such a topic! Artpe kept sighing as he pushed one hand forward. A white magical energy burned at the tip of his fingers.

"This important location was destroyed thanks to my party members. I'm not sure if this will be enough to compensate for everything. I'll want to help you restore the auction house. Ah, of course, I'll also give you money for reparations."

"Ohhhhhhhh!"

The lord let out a acclamation when a rare mage made an appearance. Moreover, unlike his terrifying companions, he was full of common sense!

How could the lord turn him down?

The lord welcomed him. He even gave a promise to not chase the two girls if Artpe helped with recovering the auction house.

This was how Artpe joined in on the work of reconstructing the auction house.

They were able to restore it back into excellent shape.

The auction would be held later that night as scheduled.

Chapter 53

Frate's Festival (6)

“You were quite bold in your actions, customer!”

It was Anywhere company’s veteran merchant Mycenae. It had been awhile, since they had met outside of a Dungeon. Mycenae slapped a file against her knee as she yelled out in agitation.

“I had no choice.”

“You had no choice? Bullshit!”

She was wearing an artifact that hindered recognition, so she looked a bit indistinct. However, Artpe and Mycenae knew each other very well, so they acted very familiar with each other.

The auction house also kept the identities of the participants a secret, so each of them were wearing a mask that also hindered recognition.

However, all they did was affect the outer appearances, so if one wanted to know the other’s identity, it could be discerned.

The auction, by its nature, couldn’t publicly reveal the identities of its participants. So everyone kept their eyes down as they participated with this unspoken understanding.

Artpe grinned as he asked her a question.

“So did you withdraw your items?”

“There is no way I could have pulled all of it out!... Fortunately, I was able to take off the ones that were going to be entered under my name beforehand.”

She called him a swindler and other bad names, but in the end, she obediently followed Artpe’s words. It was pretty cute.

When Artpe had a broad smile on his face, Mycenae pounded her chest as if she was about to suffocate from the frustration she felt. Soon, her eyes turned sharp as she made calculations.

“Didn’t you say you needed my items? Will you be purchasing my helm and halberd?”

“Nope? I don’t need it anymore.”

“I knew it’ll be like this! How did I end up in an exclusive contract with such a customer!”

Mycenae felt so indignant that she threw a tantrum in her seat. Her ears fluttered fiercely. He ignored Mycenae as he raised his head. The sun was setting, and the moon was starting to peek out. He caught the sight of a cloud that changed its outer appearance as the ownership of the sky exchanged hands. It was a really splendid sight.

However, when he brought his gaze down, he caught sight of the stage of the auction house. He saw the numerous people surrounding the stage.

“Ha.”

They were hiding their outer appearance with artifacts, and their faces were covered with masks. However, they couldn’t hide their greed and madness.

He could see them so clearly that it was as if Artpe could grasp them with his hands. The curses looked like something that would detonate by itself. The fuse wouldn’t have to be lit. In his past life, Artpe had always been surrounded by such twisted beings.

They were disgusting and pitiful.

“You... Ah, you’ve probably seen this sight quite often.”

“You are being shameless by changing the topic like this... Yes, I’ve seen it so much that I’m sick of it. Still, I’m one of them. I’m just able to hide my greed a little bit better than them.”

“I like your honesty. Truthfully, I’m the same.”

They were currently sitting in the upper seats where only the VIPs amongst the participants could enter.

Artpe was invited here, because he had been instrumental in restoring the auction house. Before he knew it, Mycenae came and sat besides him. He had thought she had been exaggerating with her words about being a veteran merchant, but it seemed she held a pretty high position.

“Ooh-mmmm?”

For a long time, Artpe checked the seats around him. Mycenae tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked him a question.

“Where are the other two...?”

“I don't know where they went.”

It was a lie. He knew where they were. He had worried they would go outside to fight a life or death battle. Fortunately, they had hidden themselves as they returned to the inn. They were probably resting right now.

Yes, their mission had ended. It was now Artpe's stage.

...well, if he needed something from them, he just had to call them back.

“Hoo-hooht. That means I'll have you to myself tonight.”

“Yes, it really is a great place for a date.”

Mycenae put on her business smile, and Artpe responded with a rotten smile. Mycenae laughed as if she knew meaning behind his words. Artpe looked behind her, and he caught sight of a woman sitting not too far away.

She wore a very fancy red butterfly mask. It could not hide her bewitching beauty...

“...bbah-doo-doo-dooth.”¹

It was the sight of Etna Carlyfate Mirecard, who was fully charged with anger.

“Heek.”

She had taken a big risk in giving him a warning. Instead of leaving the city, he was being shameless by coming to the most dangerous location within the city. Moreover, he was laughing it up besides a woman, so of course, she was angry!

“Uh, this might be dangerous. Someone might die.”

“Did you suddenly catch a fatal disease, customer?”

“I'm not talking about myself. I'm talking about ajumma.”

“Why me?”

Artpe quickly looked away from Etna, but he knew her gaze hadn't faltered. He could feel her gaze on him. Soon, Mycenae picked up on the eyes upon them.

“You really are talented in picking up women... You really outdid yourself by getting such an amazing beauty.”

“If someone else hears you, they'll be under the wrong impression.”

Of course, the most messed up part was that her words weren't a mischaracterization of this situation.

No, he knew she loved Artpe in her past life, but even if he looked mature for his age, he was only a 14 year old brat! He was well aware that she had lived over several hundred years at the very least, yet she had her heart stolen by a 14 year old brat! Was that woman really of sound mind!

“What are the guards doing? They should be arresting such a woman.”

“Even at a glance, she looks really strong. Is she perhaps stronger than you?”

“Yes, a thousand of me could attack her at once, and we won't be able to win against her.”

“If she is that strong, guards... no even a nation would be unable to detain her... huh?”

At his words, Mycenae's eyes turned round.

“Does that mean that woman is a D...”

“It is great that you are quick on the uptake, but you shouldn’t say it out loud.”

“My god. Does this mean this auction has Dem-ah-ooop-ooop!”

“Quiet.”

As expected of a veteran merchant, Mycenae had quickly assessed the situation, and she expressed her shock. Artpe quickly put a hand over her mouth. If someone heard her, the timeline of the chaos that would erupt here would be accelerated.!

“Ooh-ooop-ooop! Oop!”

“Are you going to be quiet?”

“Oop!”

Mycenae desperately nodded her head, so he took his hand away from her mouth. She immediately grabbed his arm, and he yelled out in a small voice.

“We have to run away immediately, customer!”

“Why the hell would I run away? The Quest is already in progress. I can’t run away.”

“This Quest has no reward. Let’s abandon it! You should run away quickly with me!”

“What do you mean by there is no reward?”

Artpe tilted his head in puzzlement over that portion of her words. Mycena’s expression turned blank when he answered her. Even at this moment, countless artifacts filled deceit and evil was gathering here. Then there were the energy from humans and the Demons he was aiming for. It would all be his. He had a satisfied smile on his face.

“They are all mine.”

“What...?”

If it was all for Artpe, what would happen to the people gathered here to participate in the auction?

She was sure Artpe didn't have that much money. Moreover, he couldn't just steal the items through brute force. She had no idea what he was thinking, but Mycenae suddenly remembered the brutal act of destruction he engineered not too long ago.

"Customer... I still haven't heard the reason why you destroyed the auction house."

"The one that destroyed the place was Maetel and Sienna. I know nothing."

Artpe easily ignored Mycenae's eyes, which was filled with suspicion, as he whistled to himself. He was being so impudent that she wanted to bite him hard. It was time for Artpe to persuade her to his side.

"I'm confident my obsession with money is on par with any merchant here, but I value my life over all else. Even if you possess a Unique skill and great talent in magic, you won't be able to contend with the Demon race. That is why you should give up on the idea of acquiring those items and run away..."

"Don't worry about it. I'll protect you."

"Even if you drop such a cool line, it doesn't mean that scary woman is going anywhere!"

While Mycenae and Artpe spoke in an intimate manner, the participants of auction continued to stream in. There were the nobles of the Diaz kingdom, and the movers and shakers of the market. Then there were the nobles and merchants from other countries, who had diplomatic ties to Diaz.

If everyone in this auction house was killed, it would cause mass confusion. The confusion that was sowed when the Diaz kingdom exchanged hands one year ago wouldn't be able to hold a candle to what would erupt. If the worst case scenario occurred, Frate's Festival would never be held again in the future.

"This way, master"

"I'll be the one serving you today, your excellency."

"Hmmm..."

"I'm looking forward to this."

Of course, these people were well aware of their own importance. This was why they traveled with guards that were around mid-100s in terms of level.

The problem was the fact that every single one of them had the seed of a curse hiding within their body. When the curses were triggered, they would basically become excellent steeds that could be used by the Demon King's army. No one here would be able to escape.

So what would happen if Artpe stepped forward and said, 'This festival should be canceled'?

Would the people retreat?

He would tell them the Demon King's army is aiming for the human world, and they should disperse.

Would they retreat while saying, 'Ah. Is that so! It took us two months to get here, but since it is the Demon king's army, we'll go wash our feet and sleep in our home!?

Would they really go back to their home?

No way.

Artpe would be fortunate if the people don't accuse him of being a minion of the Demon King's army. Then there was a chance that these curses were planted over a long period of time, and if he caused a ruckus, it might act as a catalyst in stimulating the curse. It might set off the curses for sure.

This was why he chose to overturn the board. He would act as if he was dancing to their tune, and at the last most crucial moment, he would completely reverse the cause and effect!

"Are the two other customers going to bust up this place again...?"

"I don't use such lowbrow methods. Actually, that is the worst way to go about doing things."

Artpe answered Mycenae's words with a snort.

Mycenae wondered what Artpe was aiming for. She kept thinking about it, but she had

no idea what it could be. She groaned as she moved her head into gear.

"It has something to do with the reconstruction of the auction house."

"I'll give you 60 points for that answer."

"That's a failing grade... You are strict."

"Eeeek. Artpehhhhh...!"

On the other hand, Etna's gaze continued to be planted squarely on Artpe. Mycenae and Artpe (from the outside) looked as if they were sharing an intimate conversation. The sight made her anger boil.

At first, she had been worried and nervous about Artpe, who had come here by ignoring her words. However, such docile emotions continued to erode away as she watched him play with another woman. Her anger grew!

She was being like this even though Artpe wasn't her man!

At first, Artpe thought she was inserted into the field to put down anyone that tried to interfere with the plan. However, her attention was marked solely on Artpe, so this didn't seem likely.

Or maybe she was staring at Artpe, because she decided he was the most dangerous person here... Anyways, it seemed she wouldn't get anything done today.

'It is unfortunate that she is staring at me, but she won't be able to stop my plan. I am the puppet master today.'

Even as Artpe smirked, he felt his inner heart become a little bit heavier.

If Artpe hadn't been here, the plan of the Demon King's army would have proceeded without a hitch. Since she was at the heart of the site where the plan would be carried out, she would witness all the atrocities...

She had an unusually weak heart, so she would become wounded by this event. It happened quite often in his past life.

She never had the time to recover. She continuously became wounded, and as her level

climbed, her soul rotted away to a point that there was no way to recover it.

'She really is the type of woman that would do well living in the countryside while feeding cows.'

In fact, the problem was with god, who gave them such twisted destinies. It would be great if Maetel and Sienna grew up fast, so they could kill god!

"However, today will be different."

"Yes, customer? What did you just say?"

"Thank you for waiting so long!"

Mycenae seemed to have picked up the meaning behind the words Artpe had mumbled to himself. She was about to question him when the auctioneer appeared on stage with exquisite timing. The greed of all the humans gathered in the auction house was focused on the auctioneer.

All the artifacts had been gathered inside the auction house. The Demons didn't enter the auction house. They were spread all of the city and port. They smiled as if they were waiting for something. As if it was blessing the hell's banquet that was about to start, the moon let out a bleak light.

[Ba-dump]

It was a very faint heartbeat that could be heard by Artpe. Artpe was sure he caught the sound, so he let out a laugh. The auctioneer, who hadn't heard the sound unlike him, let out a sonorous shout.

"The auction will start now!"

The curtain rose on the stage.

Chapter 54

Frate's Festival (7)

“Two thousand gold.”

“Two thousand five hundred.”

“We’ve got 2,500 gold. For reference, this amulet’s prior owner was Sir Patra. He had won every battle he had participated in. He was executed after the rebellion when it was found out that his cousin had been involved with the archduke’s faction. The ability and luck of this item made its owner victorious in battle. At the same time, it has the curse of false accusation over it. In the hands of a good craftsman, its performance can be overwhelmingly improve!”

“Sir Patra... I’ll express my admiration towards him by bidding 3,000 gold.”

“Three thousand three hundred gold.”

The greed of the people were used as firewood. The auction heated up. Most of the artifacts and treasures were sold for an exorbitant amount of price. People paid several thousand gold for each item. The crowd as a whole were going nuts.

The artifacts that were relatively low priced, bulk items and specialized items with no controversial stories behind them were all sold during the day. The ones that were being put up for auction were the absurdly expensive items, and the artifacts with questionable stories behind them.

“Next is Marquis R’s wife’s private...”

“Five hundred thousand gold!”

“Seven hundred thousand gold.”

How could people get excited and pay a high price for a simple piece of cloth that holds no magical energy? Even if the owner was a beautiful woman, it doesn’t mean a piece of cloth would gain some kind of special significance.

Artpe thought humans were truly foolish as he turned his head. When he did, he found that Mycena was staring at him with displeasure. Artpe decided to make an excuse.

“You know what’s going on here?”

“Even if you are young, I guess you are male.”

“It isn’t like that. I wasn’t looking at it, because I wanted to buy it. I was curious as to the thought process behind the scoundrels that want to buy the lingerie.”

“Yes, I’m sure you were doing that. You are at an age where you should be very curious about such things, so it isn’t as if I can’t understand it... However, you should refrain from putting your hand on your party members. It won’t end with a joke.”

“I already know, ajumma. I don’t want you to even joke about such a subject.”

Currently, Artpe didn’t fear the Demon king the most. He worried Etna or Maetel would come at him at night. He was worried they would assault him by throwing their body at him. He knew he would be on the losing end if he lingered on this topic, so Artpe changed the topic by force.

“Anyways, they already know each other’s identity, yet they don’t hesitate to buy such items.”

“...it happens only in Frate. Everyone becomes a bit freed from their rank and power. If people become restrained when they enter the Frate’s Festival, it would cause an immense negative impact on Diaz’s economy. This is why no one is objecting when they know the underwear of someone’s wife is being traded.”

“Moreover, it has been 3 years since the last festival, and the power of the throne is as weak as it has ever been. This is also after the rebellion... It holds all the ingredients that is needed to make things worse”

Moreover, the spoon of the Demon King’s army had been placed in this pot. They had fantastic timing.

Artpe felt the upsurge in the atmosphere inside the auction house, and the curse was slowly being activated. Artpe could feel it through his entire body as the cursed artifacts started resonating with the activating curse. He let out a deep sigh. When Mycena saw this, she must have had a slight misunderstanding.

“...so do you want the underwear of Marquis R’s wife?”

“I don’t need it.”

“If it is underwear, I can give you mine. It’ll be 1,500 gold.”

“I won’t accept it even if you give me 1,500 gold.”

“Customer, you are very rude!”

“I’m better than the immoral merchant, who is trying to sell me her underwear for 1,500 gold.”

The tension within the auction house continued to build, and it felt as if it would explode if a single spark was introduced. At that moment, a new cart was brought in. It was placed on the auction house’s platform.

Artpe unconsciously looked at it, and he became a bit surprised at what he saw.

“Next item is... This is quite surprising! It is the longsword of Sir Edward Meletin, who ended the rebellion!”

“What!?”

“Sir Meletin!?”

The auction house was overturned once again. There were individuals that suddenly stood up from their seat. Some even unmasked themselves by mistake.

Artpe had been surprised by the artifact itself, but the people here were clearly surprised by the name of the artifact’s owner.

He asked Mycenaе a question.

“Who’s Edward Meletin?”

“Didn’t you just hear what he said? He’s the one that ended the rebellion. He was a knight employed under a nameless marquis, yet his sword was able to emit strands of fire aura. He burned the black magicians and knights that were under the Archduke’s faction. When he captured the Archduke, everyone was shocked! They thought a new

powerhouse had made his presence known. It was speculated that he was one of the top-ranking knights with a level over 250. They wondered how and why this man had been unable to distinguish himself before..."

"Ah. I see..."

So that's how it was. Artpe answered without much energy as his eyes took in the longsword.

The complete information about the item was reflected in his eyes.

[Netherworld Flame Sword of Madness]

[The Fire Spirit Meltia was born from a volcano in the Demon world. She lived freely for tens of thousands of years before she was forcefully imprisoned by the power of a curse. Three types of metal mined from the volcano in the Demon world was combined to make a sword where she was imprisoned. The sword can emit an outrageous amount of fire, and it can burn everything it cuts. As a price for using this power, the user's magical energy will be depleted, and in the end, the soul will also be harvested. The soul once again turns into the chain that keep Meltia imprisoned. This in turn increases the artifact's power.]

"Of course, he wasn't known until he acquire that sword..."

"Huh? Do you perhaps know something about it? Aht! That's right! If it is you, you should have the information regarding that sword..."

"Koo-oooooooooh."

The sight of the description of the sword made him feel disgusted. He felt dumbfounded by it, and at that moment, he heard a groan from nearby.

He didn't have to turn around to know the owner of the voice. It was none other than Etna.

She was born from fire, and she held domain over all fire. A Fire Spirit was trapped within a mere item through a curse, so he didn't have to ask her to know what emotions she was feeling right now. Did she perhaps enter into this auction with the purpose of recovering this item? It made him wonder.

However, that was impossible. That sword was the trigger that activated the curse of the Demon King's army. He was sure of that point.

"Koo-oohk. Kooooooooohk."

"Etna..."

Artpe carelessly spoke the name of Etna. He quickly took control of his own mouth. What would be accomplished by calling her over? She couldn't go against the Demon King's orders. It wasn't as if Artpe could step forward in her stead to overturn the board.

"This sword of fire contains the valor of Sir Edward Meletin! We'll start it at 5,000 gold!"

"Seven thousand gold!"

"Eight thousand gold!"

The highlight of the auction was probably this flame sword. It didn't matter if one was a count, marquis, baron or a viscount. Everyone became excited as the price of the sword kept increasing.

"I have to buy that!"

"Sir Edward Meletin... I'm sure it was that sword!"

As soon as they entered Frate, the curse that had been secretly building within their body started to reveal their teeth. The curse started to encroach on their body.

There were the participants bidding on the items, the people that were guarding the bidders, and the people that didn't have the money to bid. The ones without money couldn't speak out, so they were burning with desire. It didn't matter who they were. The curse influenced them in an impartial manner.

"Nine thousand gold!"

"Ten thousand!"

"Eleven thousand!"

“Twelve thousand!”

“We’ll changed the minimum amount you can raise the bid to 2,000...”

“Fourteen thousand!”

“Huh. This is weird. This is too...”

“...it has started.”

Artpe realized the trigger had been pulled at some point. It was as the Demon King’s army had intended. The desire of humans within the auction had reached its zenith, and it caused the curse to thicken. It was thick enough to be seen with one’s eyes.

Then another curse was activated, and the curses started to stack. It was something even a level 200 magician wouldn’t be able to escape easily. The trap was encircled around everyone’s neck.

Then the Demons that resided in the port and the outer city started to make their move. Everyone was focused on the auction house at that moment. The Demons unhesitatingly emitted a vast quantity of magical energy to trigger another curse. In a flash, the curse reached its zenith, and it covered the entire city!

“Koohk!”

“Kyahhhhhhhhhk!”

Artpe had recognized it early on. The magical energy was formed into the shape of a magic circle. Everything and everyone gathered within the auction house was being used as ingredients. It was a magic circle that embroiled the entire city!

There was no turning back now. The whole city would be imbued with the curse. A very small spark could burn the city to the ground!

“Twenty two thousand!”

“Twenty six thousand!”

“My god.”

Mycenae was a Dungeon Merchant. As a basic requirement, her level was high, but her understanding of magic was also deep. Of course, even she didn't pinpoint what was wrong within Frate. However, she was well aware of the fact that the people were acting in an abnormal manner.

“C... customer, this is...”

She wondered if she should just run away from here. At this point, she didn't care about her reputation as a merchant or the Anywhere company. She looked ready to cry, and by instinct, she grabbed Artpe's hand.

From the beginning to end, Artpe continued to remain in his seat. He grinned as he looked at Mycenae's expression, then he firmly held her hand.

“I told you I'll protect you. Don't worry about it.”

“...”

Mycenae shut her mouth. The hand that was holding her hand was so dependable that she forgot that he was younger than her for a brief moment! She acted silly, because she had suffered a surprise attack by Artpe. However, at that moment, the situation was approaching its climax.

“Thirty six thousand...!”

“I said thirty six thousand first!”

“Then thirty eight...”

“Fifty thousand!”

“Fifty thousand...!? Eeeeeeeeek...”

“I don't have that much money. I don't have that much money... Shit. The treasure is right in front of eyes, yet I'm going to lose it!”

“If I can't solve this with money...”

“You dare!?”

It was very natural as to how the spark would be lit. Someone just had to unsheathe his sword or chant a magic spell, and it would spur the magic circle into completion.

The curse would be spread towards the city, and if things went well, it could spread to the entire country. It could even spread across the border to burn everything. It was a clean and bold strategy that wasn't seen even in the legends or myths.

It seems the Demon King really put effort into this plan. If he acted this way in the previous life, Artpe wouldn't have died!

"This is my revenge, you damn bastard."

Artpe smirked as he mumbled to himself.

It happened at that moment. It felt as if blood was about to be shed inside the auction house when the sound of a roar rang out.

[Mwahhhhhhhhhh!]

"Koo-ooooooh-ook!"

"What the hell...!?"

The nobles and their knights had been about to confront each other for the Netherworld Flame Sword of Madness. However, they all fell to the floor at the same time.

It wasn't just their movement being suppressed. The yell that had come from an unknown source had completely dominated their mind and body. The energy that had been making them act crazy was dispersed. It was as if they had just woken up from sleep. Their eyes turned round as they looked at their surrounding.

"What am I doing...?"

"M... my god. Tomas, I want you to put your sword away! We are supposed to fight with money, yet you are trying to show off with your martial prowess. This isn't an action that is befitting a noble!"

"However, his lordship... His lordship gave the order... Mmmm? What the hell?"

“Die!”

“Koohk!?”

While some people were confused, the ones that were still unable to break completely out of the curse were still in an agitated state. They were about to attack the confused people that had stopped in place! Once again, the roar filled the auction house.

[Mee-oh-ooh-ahhhhhhhhhhh!]

No, it wasn’t just the auction house. The yell rode along the energy of the curse that was gathered inside auction house, and it spread into the magic circle formed by the Demons.

Of course, most of the curse’s energy that was boiling up in the city was being ‘eaten.’ The trigger and the fuel was being consumed before it could explode. This was why the curse lost its energy before the people residing in the city had any idea something was wrong.

“W... what the hell is this...?”

As a Four Heavenly King of the Demon King’s army, Etna had to polish her senses over the countless number of years. This was why she was the first one to realize something was wrong. Her eyes turned round.

She knew that the auction house had been destroyed and rebuilt that day. However, she only sensed a strengthening spell that reinforced the structural integrity of the auction house. She hadn’t sense any other trace of Mana. Who could have done this? Someone had casted a intricate spell that had tricked even Etna!

“No, the only one culprit that could have pulled this off was Artpe...”

Etna looked at Artpe with dumbfounded eyes when her gaze met his. Artpe had such a mischievous smile on his face that she wanted to pinch his cheek. However, Artpe opened his mouth before she could say anything. He just shaped his words without vocalizing it, but his message was delivered to her.

‘I’ll get it back for you.’

“Get back what...”

She unconsciously spoke the question out loud, but in the next moment, she shut her mouth. Artpe had casted a spell over the auction house. To be precise, it was a ‘Spell Modification Spell’ that he casted using the Greed Beast and his Mana Strings. There was still another step that had yet to occur.

[Kyahhhhhhhhhhk!]

[Koo-haaaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

“T... this sound!?”

The first stage of the spell was to let the Greed Beast suck in the curse that was supposed to spread into the city using the magic circle. However, the curse hadn’t completely dissipated. The second stage of his plan was to send the remaining curse energy into the Demons on standby using the magic circle.

[Auction house! It is at the auction house!]

[Koo-hahhhhhhhhhhk! It is mine! I’ll have it!]

All of the city’s greed was focused on the auction house. Of course, the cursed Demons unhesitatingly headed towards the auction house.

The auction house had been at the center of the magic circle. In the process of reconstructing the auction house, he had used his Mana Strings to make a fundamental change to the magic circle!

“Demons! It’s the Demon race! Demons appeared from all over the city, and they are rushing the auction house!”

“Then the abnormal state of our mind from a moment ago...!”

“Demons! It’s the Demons! We are being raided by the Demons!”

Everyone within the auction house came to their senses as they stood up. Artpe let out a leisurely smile as he watched this sight.

He had made fixes to the Record link, and he had transformed Sienna’s curse. In the process, he had become quite good at modifying spells. He had access to the heart of the magic circle, so of course, he was able to make changes to this curse! It wouldn’t

have made sense if he was unable to do so!

“Customer, this is...”

“It was supposed to be humans vs humans. I just changed it to Demons vs humans.”

Artpe spoke in a nonchalant manner as he laughed. Mycenae had no idea how he was able to use such a method. All she could do was stare at him with her mouth wide open.

“I had my eyes wide open, yet you got me... Amazing.”

Moreover, it was the same for Etna. She possessed abilities that was close to what a high rank magician possessed, but she didn't deal with highly difficult spells. Her ability was focused on making powerful magic using fire. Of course, Artpe was well aware of this fact. This was why he was able to use such a bold strategy.

The items in the auction house was supposed to cause conflict amongst the humans, but the humans automatically lost interest in the items when they were faced with the prospect of facing Demons. Of course, those items were...

[Mee-ahhhhhhhhhng!]

“Yes. You should eat a lot and grow rapidly.”

As its owner, he could vaguely see its form. The Greed Beast was eating the energy of the curse that was filling the auction house.

The egg was able to be hatched, because countless requisite was gathered and overlapped in this place. It was busy eating the curse and evil mana that was right in front of it. It would probably be able to materialize fully when it was able to eat everything here.

“Well, I should...”

Artpe let out a truly satisfied laughter as he turned around. He could feel the explosive energy of the Demons on the other side. They were all bundles of EXP that would be good for him.

“...put the finishing touch on this.”

From the start to the end of the second Quest, everything had progressed according to his calculations.

It was time for him to acquire his reward.

Chapter 55

Lunatic Wave (1)

Fortunately, the humans had one advantage on their side. The strongest people in Frate were all gathered within the auction house.

“What about the guards within the city!”

“The Demons aren’t an opponent that can be stopped with just the guards! Fortunately, it seems the Demons are mesmerized by something within the auction house. They are coming straight for this place...”

“Mesmerized...? Wait a moment. Weren’t we also...”

The humans realized that they had also fallen prey to the scheme of the Demon King’s army. They vaguely realized this truth. Of course, they had no idea that the plan had been broken and changed by Artpe. Fortunately, they were well aware of the fact that they would have been screwed over by the Demon king’s army if they hadn’t come back to their senses.

“Auction... We are stopping the auction.”

“We have to move the artifacts to safety...”

“We shouldn’t waste our time on that! We have to face the Demons!”

“No, the artifacts are already gone! Was this also a part of the plan hatched by the Demons...”

“How many times do I have to say that facing the Demons are more important than the artifacts!”

Of course, there were still some foolish people that desired the artifacts despite being freed from the curse. However, the Greed Beast had been busily eating the artifact, and in turn, it had forcefully canceled the confusion being felt amongst the humans. Some had wanted to take advantage of the confusion to slip away with the artifacts, but the

artifacts were missing. This was why they had no choice, but to focus on the Demons!

“This is all thanks to me!”

“Customer... For once, could you answer my question properly?”

“I don’t know anything. My secretary handled everything for me.”

“You don’t have a secretary!”

He didn’t mind continuing the banter with Mycena. Unfortunately, he couldn’t leave everything to the humans. The situation was too desperate to do so.

Even in such a disordered atmosphere, he scanned over the people getting ready for a fight. The guardian knights were pushed to the forefront by the nobles of Diaz, and there were the figures dispatched from other countries and merchant companies. Unbeknownst to him, Etna had approached him, and she was glaring at him. He turned to look at her.

“Are you going to participate? If you help, it would be reassuring.”

However, Etna didn’t even bother turning down his offer to join the party. She tackled a different subject.

“...Artpe, did you perhaps know this would happen?”

“What are you talking about? You were the one that gave me the hint.”

“But you...”

He was right. She had taken a risk in giving Artpe a warning. She did it knowing that her identity might be revealed.

However, she had taken a liking to this human despite it being their first meeting. She had been taken aback at how deep he had burrowed into her soul. The human had left behind a mark in her soul. That was why she hadn’t wanted to see Artpe get hurt.

No... If she was being more truthful, she didn’t want him to leave her behind in this scene of violence.

Artpe was a talent that was rarely seen in the human world. She had wished Artpe would pick up on the hint she dropped. She had wanted him to completely foil the plan of the Demon king's army.

She knew she had been wishing for the impossible.

She was under the yoke of the Demon King, so she hadn't been able to give him a proper hint. It would be ridiculous for her to expect him to have a complete grasp of the situation. There was no way he could have made preparations for this event. Even a hero wouldn't have been able to accomplish it.

"Yet I was able to accomplish something so hard to accomplish?"

"You can read my mind!?"

"Nope. I just made an educated guess. I thought you would be shocked at my damn fine abilities."

Etna was at a loss for words. Even if he had the ability to back it up, it was hard to act like this big of an asshole. If he was a Demon, she would have wanted to recruit him to become one of the Four Heavenly Kings. This was how big of an asshole he was being. As if Artpe could understand what she was feeling, he smirked as he once again asked her for her help.

"Let's stop talking about such nonsense for now... So, are you going to help us?"

"...I'm sorry. I'm unable to do anything."

Yes, even if she wasn't given explicit orders not to do so, she wouldn't be able to side with the humans against the Demon king's army. At this point, she had basically acknowledged that she was a Demon with her own words.

"Yes, I guess it can't be helped."

If he was like any other human, he would have said, 'You bitch! You are a Demon!'

Or it was the perfect time to say, "You filthy bitch! I knew it from the time you proudly swung your big chest in front of me!". However, he didn't say anything along the same line. On the contrary, it was Etna, who became surprised.

“How are you able to accept everything so easily!”

“I want you to get out of here quietly, Etna. No one here can identify your magical energy.”

“So why are you able...!”

Artpe activated his Read All Creation ability, and he saw the dark magic shackles around Etna’s neck. It was something only he could see. After he glanced at it, he spoke.

“Sir Meletin’s sword. That’s the item you want, right? Just give me a location that’ll be convenient for you. After everything ends, I’ll look you up, and I’ll bring the sword along.”

“You...!?”

Even his parting shot was perfect. Etna felt as if she had been laid bare and thrown in front of him.

She wondered if her feelings for him was also revealed to him. She was angry, taken aback and a little bit happy. Her face turned red from feeling those emotions.

“How much do you know about me!”

“Everyone that heard you grind your teeth when the item came out could come to the same conclusion.”

“Ughhh.”

It was a lie. He probably knew all the secrets regarding the sword.

Despite this fact, he was going to do this for her...! Why! Her confusion kept mounting, and it was getting hard for her to think straight. Etna was close to tears.

However, she had no choice, but to listen to him right now. She had lived for over 200 years, yet at this moment, she felt as if had reverted into being a child.

“The Demons are coming. Hurry, Etna.”

“...I’ll be at Jaime’s Inn. It is in sector C.”

He memorized the information then he nodded his head.

“I’ll be there.”

“Also...”

Etna hesitated for a brief moment. She was barely successful in picking out a word that she would be able impart to him.

“Ocean.”

“Ocean? What about the ocean... Huh? Wait a moment.”

The word had come out of left field, but Artpe suddenly had a thought. He quickly turned his head, but Etna was already gone. This hint was direct and pertinent to the current situation, so he had no difficulty discerning the meaning behind it.

“This is nuts. It wasn’t just a one and done...?”

“What does she mean by the ocean, customer?”

“It is an annual event that occurs in the ocean! You should already know about it.”

“Annual event... Ah!?”

At that point, Mycenaë had a complete grasp of the situation.

There was a reason why the Frate’s Festival had always been held early in summer. There was a reason why ships couldn’t traverse the ocean during fall and winter. As a merchant that was part of a merchant association, there was no way she wouldn’t know about it.

“Lunatic wave!”

“That’s right.”

Her eyes turned round.

“We shouldn’t be worried about the Demons right now! We haven’t put up the barriers yet, and there are several dozen ships docked at the port!”

“That is why we have to bring down the Demons as soon as possible. Shit!”

Artpe quickly moved towards the entrance of the auction house. The lord of Frate and his knights were already stationed there.

“Magician! Are you going to help us?!”

“Lord, once I help you defeat the Demons, will you wipe the slate clean for me and my party members of all our wrongdoings? It is your call.”

It was a deal that took care of the past and what was to come! The lord unhesitatingly nodded his head.

“It’s a deal!”

“All right. Then I want you to take all the guards to the port. I want you to shut down the port, then I want you to put up the barriers!”

“Barriers? What the hell are you talking...”

It didn’t take the lord too long to pick up on what Artpe was implying.

“Are you trying to say the Luatic Wave is about to start now!?”

“I want you to think about the people and artifacts that were gathered for the Frate’s Festival. Then there is the curse that was placed here... This was their plan from the start!”

Lunatic Wave.

It was a phenomenon that lasted from fall to winter. The monsters residing in the ocean invaded inland.

All of creation was infused with Mana, and this included the ocean. However, the quantity of Mana within the ocean waned during the fall, and as a consequence, the Mana on land swelled. The monsters within the ocean was sensitive to this change, so they ventured inland.

Of course, ships couldn't travel the waters during this time period. All the regions with access to the ocean were sealed off before the fall arrived. Tall barriers were raised to block the monsters. This was also the reason why Artpe had wanted to cross the ocean before fall.

However, that plan been all for naught!

"It seems the Demon king's army can cause changes even to the rules of nature!"

"The conditions needed to precipitate this was sufficient. Currently, the problem we face right now is the fact that the city is an overwhelmingly attractive target!"

This particular Frate's Festival had been excessively grand. This resulted in a large number of humans gathering at this location, and in turn, it had also attracted a lot of sea monsters to Frate. Then the Demon race used various curses to amplify the amount of Mana within Frate, and all these factors induced the Lunatic Wave.

There was a chance that their curses had extended into the ocean!

'It was a single plan that caused two effects. Splendid. It was an excellent plan, you demon king bastard! Shit... '

What grinded Artpe's gears the most was the fact that he wouldn't have been able to prevent this situation even if he had known about this beforehand. Artpe had the ability to tangle up a magic spell, but he wasn't able to cancel the magic spell.

Artpe had firmly been under a misconception. He had thought the plan was to cause the humans to fight each other. He thought it was a ploy to cause confusion within Diaz.

Wrong!

It didn't matter what method was used to precipitate this event. The goal was to activate the curses. The amount of Mana within Frate had to explode upwards. Even the Greed Beast that was going nuts right now had become a very good ingredient in inducing the Lunatic Wave.

He had done his best, yet it felt as if he had been played by the Demon king. It was a dirty feeling. It had been a long time since he felt the taste of defeat. He hadn't felt it since he was chosen to be a hero in this reincarnated life.

“Kyahhhhhhhh!”

“Get out of here, lowly Demons! Get out!”

“You dirty Demons! You dare invade human land!”

“You will never be able to look down on the power of humans again!”

The humans gathered here didn’t realize that a bigger calamity was about to hit them in the near future. This was why each of them were spouting one liners in an attempt to look cool. Then they started fighting with the Demons. Blood and tears were being shed by the brave people. It would probably be a fodder for a future heroic tale. Maetel would probably look at this sight, and she would have said ‘Humans are amazing!’

However, Artpe had already expanded the range of his senses, and he could feel the ocean vibrate and heave. He could feel the sea monsters rushing towards them. He didn’t care about some shitty hero’s tale. At this rate, Frate would meet its end. There was a chance that Diaz might fall!

“Hurry, lord!”

“But this place...”

“I’ll stop them with my comrades!”

“Koohk... Understood!”

If Artpe hadn’t flaunted his power earlier, the lord wouldn’t have listened to his words. However, Artpe had shown his overwhelming ability and leadership in the reconstruction of the auction house, so his words made the lord move.

“Please take care of this place!”

“Leave it to us!”

The lord nodded once towards Artpe, and he quickly gathered his knights before he left the auction house. Artpe let out a sigh of relief. Fortunately, Etna’s warning hadn’t been too late. They might be able to avoid the worst case scenario.

“The only thing left is...”

He stretched out both hands as he activated his Mana Strings. He let out a sigh.

The fact that he was able to twist the curse was great. Thanks to his efforts, several dozen Demons were out of their minds as they rampaged. However, if he had known the Lunatic Wave had been waiting for him in the near future, he wouldn't have twisted the curse in this fashion!

"What are you going to do, customer? There are way too many Demons here that are close to level 200."

"Are you going to help us?"

"Yes, and it isn't just me. The other merchants are making preparations to do the same. It seems we'll somehow live past this, but... Customer."

This woman should have lived a fair amount of years, yet she was scared of a lot of things. If she was like Maetel and Sienna, he could have just stroked her head. Unfortunately, it was impossible, since he was still too short.

Instead, he firmly held Mycenae's hand once more as he spoke.

"Don't worry. Maetel will somehow come through for us. "

"Aren't you supposed to reassure me by saying, 'I'll somehow figure things out!' It would have made me fall for you for sure!"

"What do I gain from seducing you, ajumma?"

Artpe snorted as he raised the communication device. He had one that connected him to Silpennon's party, and he had one that allowed him to communicate with Mycenae. Of course, he made preparations in case his party was split up. He had purchased a communication device, so he would be able to contact Maetel.

"Maetel, I want you to come towards the auction house as fast as you can with Sienna right now."

[Yes!]

He liked this about Maetel. He didn't have to explain the tiresome details to her. He could end things just by saying one word!

[I'll be there, Artpe!]

"Yes, I'll be waiting."

She was so dependable that it made him almost want to fall for her. After he heard Maetel let out an energetic reply, he ended the call. Artpe once again turned his gaze towards the battlefield.

The humans were weak compared to the dozen Demons present, yet the humans were putting up a fight. He had seen this several hundred... several thousand times in his previous life.

"Shit."

He was now on the other side, yet he had to put on the same mental attitude he had in his past life.

"Die, you sons of bitches!"

As he let out rough words that didn't befit a hero, Artpe joined the battle between Demons and the humans!

Chapter 56

Lunatic Wave (2)

“Kyahhhhh!”

“Humans, those items are not meant for you. It is meant for us to wield!”

“Koohk. You bastards...!”

“These bastards are overtaken by madness! They were already strong, but now they are impossible to stop with the madness afflicting them...!”

Artpe had flipped the curse, and it caused the Demons to reveal themselves to the humans. At the same time, Artpe had prevented the Demons from running away. He wanted to create a situation where the Demons would have to confront the humans.

His plan had worked very well. The Demons didn't even think about hiding their presence as they ran full tilt towards the auction house. However, even Artpe couldn't do anything about the strengthening effect the curse had on the Demons.

“Fortunately, the Demons aren't casting any magic spells.”

“They aren't of sane mind, so how can they calculate and cast complicated magic spells?”

Artpe snorted as he raised a finger. Mana Strings started to appear from the tip of his finger. One strand, two strands, four strands...

In a flash, several dozen strands were emitted, and they started to coil around each other. They formed into something that resembled a rope.

Of course, he didn't end it there.

“Hyper Rubbing.”

“You really are persistent about using that magic spell.”

After several dozen strands of Mana Strings were twisted into one, Hyper Rubbing was applied. In a flash, an immense amount of friction was caused. The Mana Strings heated up as Mana was consumed.

Artpe swung it horizontally. The several Demons that were trying to jump over the line created by the knights were all flung backwards. The level of these Demons ranged from mid hundreds to early two hundreds, yet they couldn't put up much fight against the attack. They were sent flying.

“Kyah-hahk!”

“Kooo-ahhhhk!”

“Oh oh! As expected of the Magician!”

“Hoohp!”

Artpe wasn't swinging a weapon with substance. It was a magic whip. This was why he could swing it tirelessly as he attacked the Demons from a distance.

Hyper Rubbing was applied to the several dozen Mana Strings, so even a short contact would create a violent backlash. It was as if the defensive gears and the skin of the Demons weren't even there. The Mana Strings broke through everything, and it even caused the flesh underneath to burn.

There was the damage caused directly by the friction, and the damage caused by the heat created by the friction. It was a result that couldn't be achieved through a simple fire spell.

“You can't see it when I'm using a single strand, but when I use several dozen strands at the same time, the Hyper Rubbing becomes much more beneficial to use!”

“If you have the time to leisurely give such commentaries, you should swing the whip more!”

Mycenae also had a weapon. She took out a long bow that looked familiar. Artpe realized that it was the bow he had sold to her after acquiring it from the Slime Dungeon.

“You bought that for your own use!?”

“Temporary! It is temporarily in my care! If I clean and repair it, I can sell it as a new item!”

Mycenae was nonplussed as she spoke words that made her sound like a scam artist. Then she changed the form of the bow. It was reborn as a ballista that was normally used in siege warfare. A large bolt made out of magical energy appeared. It was letting out a subdued silver light.

“You have to ensure that I’m safe, customer!”

“I don’t know. You should ask Maetel to do it.”

“You are being hateful!”

Mycenae fired the arrow through the ballista. She followed Artpe’s example by attacking the Demons from a distance. The damage was secondary to the fact that their attacks were restricting the movements of the Demons. It was of big help to the humans.

“Ballista!?”

“I don’t care what it is. The time is now!”

“Koo-ahhhhhhhk!”

“Please let me send this as business expense to the Anywhere company!”

“Just shoot your arrows, dummy.”

There was one Demon, who hadn’t suffered under the full effects of the madness. Artpe’s whip shot out to surround the Demon’s neck, since it was about to chant a magic spell.

“Kahk. Kuh-huhk!”

“Good bye.”

When they received his command, the Mana Strings untied itself. It caused a powerful

rotation. The already powerful friction increased precipitously as the several dozen strands of Mana Strings started to rotate. This was a marriage between magical energy and physical force. It was the strongest offensive attack Artpe could use right now.

“Goo-ahhhhhhhhk!”

It did have the downside of rapidly consuming his Mana, but the power of the attack was peerless. The Demon’s chant was canceled, and his life was also canceled. Artpe naturally absorbed the record of the Demon, and he sensed a natural swell of Mana surge forth within him. Artpe smiled.

“All right. It seems I went up a level. The Demons lose some of their power when they enter the human world, but their EXP remain high compared to the other monsters.”

“You are probably the only one in this world that treats the Demon race as a good source of EXP.”

The two of them swapped endless banters. Artpe kept swinging his whip, and Mycenaе kept shooting the ballista.

The other humans were desperately fighting the Demons, but all the humans combined couldn’t touch the number of Demons they had killed. In a short amount of time, Mycenaе had killed two Demons, and Artpe had killed three.

“I somewhat expected this, but it seems you are special even amongst the Dungeon Merchants.”

“If it’s you, you probably had an idea of how strong I am, right?”

“I did have some idea as to how strong you were.”

Of course, he was lying. He had more than a vague idea of her power. From the moment he saw her, he had a complete understanding of her fighting power.

[Mycenaе]

[Dark Elf]

[Dungeon Merchant]

[Level : 199]

[Archery Lv59]

[Mana Control Lv38]

If one was strictly talking about level, she was superior compared to Artpe and Maetel. She also lived longer than humans, and the Elven specialty skill level was extremely high.

The only problem she had encountered was the fact that she had advanced to level 199 two years ago. It basically meant that she hadn't been able to advance to a high rank Class.

If one wanted to become a Dungeon Merchant, it wasn't just about one's potential to become a merchant. One had to possess inclination towards fighting and magic. One had to be talented in a combination of multiple disciplines, so it was a very tricky Class to advance in. Many merchants let out blood, sweat and tears, because they were deficient in terms of fighting ability or magic. They were unable to advance for a very long time.

However, Mycenae was the opposite case. Her cultivation in fighting and magic was sufficient. She was overqualified. However, she lacked in her talent as a merchant. It was the only thing that was holding her back. She probably went around touting herself as a veteran merchant, because of her inferiority complex regarding this issue.

"...customer. I know you find me to be pretty, but could you focus on the Demons?"

"Pfft."

"You snorted at that!?"

Artpe retracted his thoughts as he focused on the battle in front of him. There were around 30 Demons left. Artpe and Mycenae were in a great spot. They were fighting from the safest location possible. On the other hand, many humans had already died at the frontline.

It wasn't as if there weren't any Priests residing in this city, but they weren't able to heal everyone and dispel the curses. There weren't anywhere near enough of them.

"Koohk. Is this how the humans will fall...!"

"Lord! Where's the lord! That coward ran away!"

"We have to make do with what we have. Don't falter and endure!"

"Kyahhhhhhhhhk!"

The humans let out a resounding shout as they resisted against the Demons. It was a decent looking picture, but Artpe could only let out a sigh.

"These humans are really weak."

"Shhh, customer! They might hear you!"

There were only three humans that were over level 150. If they were inferior in terms of level, they should have learned how to work in concert with each other. However, they were brutes. The only method of fighting they knew was to throw their body at their enemies. They were basically on the same level as the grunts of the Demon king's army! This was why these two groups always killed off each other!

"Please support this side, magician!"

"Even if you hadn't said anything, I was going to send an attack!"

Artpe checked his remaining Mana. He still had 70% of his Mana left, but the real threat wasn't the group of Demons. It was the Luatic Wave! While he was controlling his Mana Strings, he turned to look at Mycenae, who was throwing fire balls towards the Demons. He was checking up on something.

"Ajumma, do you have some Mana Potion you kept back in reserve?"

"...I can't sell it to you?"

"I'll pay for it all later."

"I've received your order!"

After unloading her ballista, she had a brief moment when the ballista was reloading. She used that brief moment to hand over the Mana Potion. He held it in his mouth as he increased the number of Mana Strings.

“Die, you maggots!”

One swing of the whip pierced through three Demons. He kept rotating the Mana Strings, and the whip kept letting out heat. It was almost preternatural as to how the whip found only the most vulnerable spots on a Demon’s body to cause damage. The Demons suffered critical wounds.

“Kyahhhhhhhk!”

“Koo-hahk!”

Artpe was prioritizing his attacks against Demons that were of similar or lower level than him. This was why he was able to pierce them easily. There wasn’t much resistance against his Mana. The humans had no real understanding about Artpe’s ability, so it looked as if Demons were being killed every time he swung his whip. Their morale rose as they cheered.

“The peerless magician is helping us! The Demons are so scared that they aren’t able to attack us properly!”

“Rush them! It is time! Don’t let this opportunity slip away!”

The knights and Dungeon Merchants shouted at the same time as they faced off against the Demons. However, the Demons were still dying at the same rate, yet the human force was getting smaller at a faster rate. Basically, the humans were too weak!

“This won’t do. How ridiculous would it be if we can’t defend against the Lunatic Wave, because of this?”

Even if it would disadvantage him later on against the Lunatic Wave, should he kill all the Demons right now by pouring out all his magical energy? It happened when Artpe was dithering.

“Hooo-ahhhhhhp!”

“Eh-eet!”

“Koo-hahk!”

“Koo-ohhhhh!?”

Finally, Maetel and Sienna had arrived at the battlefield!

“Huhk. Those girls were the ones that caused the big ruckus earlier...”

“Berserker! That girl is a Berserker! Is she perhaps a Demon...”

The nobles and knights, who were in the midst of fighting against the Demons, flinched in surprise. However, the two girls didn't pay any attention to the gazes they were receiving from the other humans. They charged towards the Demons.

“Ha!”

“Hoo-oohp!”

Maetel gripped her long sword as she used Acceleration. It was as if she was sliding across the surface of the ground. Each time her sword lashed out several Demons were cut down. Sienna threw her Sledge Hammer. It crushed the head of a Demon that was about to break through the line of humans.

“She's strong!”

“My god... She wasn't part of the Demon race!?”

Once she invoked her power, Maetel didn't stop. She activated Berserk to push the power of her muscles to the extreme. She planted her foot into the ground, and she shot forth like an arrow. She pierced through the body of a Demon.

“Koo, hahk...”

“Next.”

The Demons that were left were all over level 200. They were strong, yet even in Artpe's past life, the hero had easily ignored the level difference. The Demons were cut down with a single strike.

“No one here was able to face a Demon one on one, yet she killed it with one blow!?”

“Strong... They are too strong!”

“Hooooooooo-ahhhhhhp!”

At that moment, Sienna had reached the spot where she had thrown her hammer. As soon as she retrieved it, she filled herself with magical energy, and she stomped on the ground. The wave of magical energy had a widespread effect as it impacted against the Demons. At the same time, it imparted healing energy towards the humans. It was a main skill used by the Warrior Priestess. It was called the Divine Ground.

“Ggooh-ahhhhhhhk!”

“What is that cursed ability!”

“Priestess! She’s a Priestess!”

“That girl was a Warrior Priestess!”

“The girl that was having a fight of passion with the Berserker was a Warrior Priestess... It seems the temple has gone full monty.”

It didn’t matter where she was or what point in her development she was in. Artpe knew Maetel was crazy strong. The unexpected one was Sienna. She hadn’t reached level 160, yet the Demons were unable to anything against her attacks. It was a shocking sight.

No, she’ll probably move past level 160 soon. Around half of the Demons here would be turned

Into her EXP.

‘Evil Reflector... I knew that her race was created as an antagonistic force towards the Demon race, but I never expected it to be like this.’

Sienna’s magical energy rebuffed the Demons, and all her skills contained her magical energy. This meant all her skills had the effect of dispersing magical energy of the Demons. Artpe had known all of this, yet it was entirely different to see her in action.

‘Can’t I just make her the hero?’

One thing was for sure. The decision to accept Sienna as a party member was one of the finest decisions he had made in his life.

“That weak brat became so strong in just one year.”

It seemed Sienna’s performance had also left behind a big impression on Mycenae. He smirked when he heard her express her admiration. He weighed in on the situation with his words.

“Humans normally change really quickly just like that.”

“That is the strength of the humans...”

“Strength...”

Artpe hadn’t planned on praising the human race as a whole. The fact that humans changed rapidly was a strength, but it was also a crucial weakness.

‘Since she’s a priestess... Nope, that’s fine.’

His mind had wandered during battle. It seemed he couldn’t let go of the habit he picked up as the Four Heavenly King. Artpe clicked his tongue as he swung his Mana String.

“Let’s wrap this up quickly. The night has just begun.”

“That is also my wish, customer.”

Mycenae laughed as she answered him. When her Mana arrow was reloaded into the ballista, a loud sound of an explosion was heard from the port.

“It’s here.”

Artpe clicked his tongue as he mumbled to himself. At that moment, humans and the Demons under the influence of the madness curse stopped what they were doing for a brief moment.

“Oh no.”

“This is nuts... Can it be? It’s happening right now?”

“Oh my god.”

[Zeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!]

Afterwards, an ear-splitting sound rang out through the entire city.

It was an alarm magic that warned of an impending Lunatic Wave.

Chapter 57

Lunatic Wave (3)

After the ambush by the Demons, the Lunatic Wave had arrived. It was said that unfortunate events happened in series. It perfectly described what Frate was facing

“Luantic Wave! I’m sure it’s the Lunatic Wave! Lord! Where’s the lord!?”

“He’s already at the port... I see! The lord had already foreseen this!”

“I believe a Lunatic Wave happened during the summer time several hundred years ago at a different port city!”

All the port cities had guidelines for what to do in a Lunatic Wave. Even the guests visiting the city knew it.

However, even if one wanted to follow the guideline, it was impossible to do so with the Demons in their way. The knights finally realized the intent of the Demon King’s army, and they quivered in anger.

“My god. Did the Demons use the curse to induce the Luantic Wave!”

“The Demon King is sacrificing his subordinate Demons to bring Diaz to ruins? How laughable!”

Of course, the Demon King had no intention of sacrificing his subordinate Demons.

However, there was no need for Artpe to step forward, and say something like ‘In truth, I’m the one that made the Demons go crazy!’

“Koohk. Those damned Demons!”

“Die! Die! We won’t let you do as you like! You won’t bring ruin to Diaz!”

The people were going to die by the Lunatic Wave, while they were fighting off the Demons. Of course, their heart was in the dumps.

Artpe had all killed all the Demons that were weakly affected by the curse. Those were the Demons that would have gone off script. Now the remaining Demons surged forward as they matched the intensity displayed by the humans. The Demons rampaged as if they had lost their minds.

"I was hoping the Lunatic Wave would be delayed, but those were merely hopeful thoughts."

Artpe clicked his tongue as he looked over the battlefield... When Maetel and Sienna had joined the fight, the battle had tilted completely towards the humans. After he confirmed this truth, he nodded his head.

"It'll all work out somehow. As expected, Maetel is a cheat."

Since Maetel and Sienna was at this site, everything would wrap up quickly. It would be good for him to stay here and earn EXP from killing the Demons, but Artpe's abilities would be more effective elsewhere. Instead of the small confines of the auction house where he couldn't move without getting into a fight, he would be able to borrow the power of nature to create a miracle at the port!

"Ajumma, I'll be going to the port..."

"...ooh ooh."

After he made a quick plan of action, he was about to move when Mycenae firmly grabbed the sleeve of Artpe's robe. She had her head turned away to avoid facing Artpe, yet she had a firm grip on him. Artpe was dumbfounded, so he asked her a question.

"...what are you doing?"

"Ah, it's nothing. Shouldn't we move after we wrap things up here..."

"..."

It was a busy situation where every second counted, so why was she acting as if she was weak? He was about to yell at her, but he caught sight of Mycenae's ears. Her ears were fluttering delicately. Artpe's eyebrows furrowed.

'She's been weirdly afraid, since a while ago. Maybe...'

Did she perhaps have Demon-phobia?

Artpe tested his theory as he took a step away from her. She let out a gasp, and she gripped him tighter. It was a completely different sight from the brave figure that had been firing her ballista by his side.

“You...”

“Maybe you can take me with you? Yes?”

“Ajumma, how were you able to function as a Dungeon Merchant until now...?”

Artpe let out a sigh. The tremble in her ears became worse when he moved away from her and when the screams of the Demons increased in loudness. He knew he couldn't do anything about this.

“Yes, I guess nothing will change if you leave this place. All right. We'll go together.”

“Hoo-ooooh.”

She let out a sigh of relief as she put away the ballista. Afterwards, she looked over the auction house one last time. There were people screaming their hearts out as they fought with their lives on the line. Then there were the people that couldn't exit the auction house. They couldn't fight, so these people were hiding...

Then there were the pathetic humans that were trying to find the missing auction items with bright eyes. She also caught sight of the Greed Beast that let out a happy cry as it ate all the curse and evil energy.

“I'll see you later.”

[Mee-ahhhhhhhng!]

Artpe whispered in a low voice, and the Greed Beast gave a rumbling answer. He had feared the worst case scenario might have come true. He had wondered if the Greed Beast would consider Artpe, who was the owner of the egg, as an enemy. Fortunately, the Greed Beast had acknowledged him as its master.

“Hooo.”

When he heard its reply, he smirked as he grabbed Mycenae's hand. Then he lightly pushed off the ground.

In the next moment, the two arrived at a location far away from the auction house.

"Huh...?"

Mycenae blinked her eyes when her surrounding suddenly changed. She looked around as she spoke in an accusatory tone towards Artpe.

"I wasn't able to sense you activating your magic."

"Usually, the magic spells infused into Artifacts can be activated in a stealthy manner."

"Customer, you have an artifact with Teleportation magic... Uh-muh?"

Mycenae felt Artpe grip her hand again. He once again pushed off the ground, and they traveled a distance of several hundred meters. Her eyes widened when she saw this.

"Did you perhaps use Blink right now!?"

"After I reinforced it, I'm able to move bring along another person."

"This doesn't make any sense. Blink was a spell developed as a means for a caster to escape from danger by himself-kyahhhh!"

Artpe didn't give Mycenae time to reply as he used it once more. For reference, the boots worn by Artpe had reached this state.

[Blessing of the Wind Spirit's Boots+2]

[The black leather boots is infused with wind. It was reinforced twice with a special skill to be made into a legendary artifact. The user can use Blink five times a day without consuming any Mana. The Blink can also be activated when the user is being attacked, and anyone in contact with the User can be moved too. Additional Mana can be used to activate Blink. The additional Mana increases the travel radius by a significant amount.]

"It would be great if I can reinforce it one more time. However, if I want to reinforce it further, I'm going to need a Magic Stone."

"I've heard about the legends regarding enchanters. There are so many types of reinforcement enchanting skills. They can be temporary or permanent. There are ones that require the user to fulfill a special requirement to activate it. There are also ones that can be used on humans, inanimate objects, the environment... Then there is the reinforcement skill that is above all other reinforcement skills. It allows one to 'overlap the reinforcement skill' on the same item."

"I didn't know the Reinforcement skill I earned was that type of Reinforcement skill..."

Of course, he had gained this great Reinforcement skill in the Hero's development Dungeon. It really was a bitter experience, but he couldn't deny the fact that Maetel and he had gained many important things in there.

"In that sense, I'm going to Blink two more times."

"Wait a m-kyahhhhhhhhk!"

The boots' Blink activated, and he was used to using it now. It really took them two Blinks for Artpe and Mycenae to arrive on the port's barrier wall, which was facing the ocean. The monsters were crawling in front of them. There were more monster than there were high waves.

"We are here."

"How can this be Blink? What the hell is..."

"Huhk! Magician! Also, weren't you the merchant from the Anywhere company?"

"As always, I am in your care... ah-yaht."

The lord was tirelessly moving along the wall to encourage the soldiers. He became surprised when he saw Artpe. Even in such a desperate situation, Mycenae was trying to go into her business mode. Artpe poked her in her side, so she would back off. He surveyed the situation.

"Fortunately, we are still at the early stages of the Lunatic Wave, so the weak ones are coming to shore."

"Y... you are correct! However, we are faced with a problem. This isn't the only region where the monsters will try to invade. Somehow we were able to raise the 1st tier

barrier wall around the whole place...

"You encountered a problem when trying to raise the 2nd tier walls."

They had built 3 stages of barrier walls to stop the sea monsters from entering the city.

Normally the 1st tier of barriers were buried deep within the water. It was raised when the Lunatic Wave was about to happen. It was easy to put in place, but it also meant that the wall was low. Basically, it could take care of the minor monsters, but the monsters above them would break through it.

The ships in the dock had to be isolated in specific locations for the 2nd tier of barrier walls to be activated. It was a barrier made out of magic. It was a barrier made out of a large concentration of Mana, so it also had the effect of attracting the monsters to stay near the wall. It was a fantastic barrier, but...

"Everyone's ships are docked at the pier."

"That is a problem..."

They didn't have the time to isolate the ships into their designated locations, so the barrier couldn't be put up. The fact that they were even able to raise the 1st barrier wall was an effort to be commended. The lord let out a deeper sigh.

"We tried to skip the 2nd barrier to raise the 3rd barrier. However, the ships that were parked between the 1st and 3rd barrier prevents us from raising the 3rd."

"Hmmm... From my perspective, it doesn't sound like a big problem."

"What?"

Before Artpe spoke again, he turned his head to survey his surroundings. Everyone was busily moving around in an attempt to do their assigned tasks, so no one would be able to hear their conversation.

"Lunatic Wave is a natural disaster. Even if all the customers here lost their possessions, they won't be able to lodge a complaint against you. Isn't there a treaty between countries that specify this stipulation?"

“A... as expected of a magician, you are well informed...”

“If you hadn’t defended against the Lunatic Wave aggressively like you are doing right now, it might be a different story. However, you are doing your best right now, so they won’t be able to place the blame on you. Isn’t it so? You are working your heart out right now.”

Artpe’s words completely untied the knot within the lord’s heart. A small smile returned to the face of the lord.

“That’s right. You are right. Yes, I was worried for nothing. The lives of our people are the most important! Absolutely! Then we have to put up the 3rd tier barriers...”

“No, why are you jumping to that conclusion?”

“Mmm?”

The lord tilted his head in puzzlement. If the gesture was done by a cute girl, it was forgivable. However, an old man was making such a gesture, and it was really creepy. Artpe pushed down the urge to beat him up, and he continued his explanation.

“It is as I’ve said, lord. If we do our best, no one will complain even if we destroy all their possessions.”

“That is why I said we should ignore the boats to put up the 3rd tier barriers... Ooh-mmm?”

At that moment, the lord finally understood what Artpe was getting at. The raising of the 3rd tier barriers weren’t their best option... If they did their absolute best, they would be able to raise the 2nd barrier!

The lord’s face was filled with shock. At that moment, Artpe smirked as he continued speaking.

“In the process of us fighting hard, we can destroy all the ships. We can sink them all, and they wouldn’t be able to muster up a complaint. Aren’t I right?”

“Y... you.”

Devil! The Devil was right in front of him! The lord’s face turned pale as he shook his

head. There had been a hint of a smile on Artpe's lips, but now that smile deepened. The words that drove the final nail in was spoken by Artpe.

"If we are to do this, we have to do it now, lord. The figures from the foreign lands are all gathered at the auction house."

"...d... did you perhap put all of this into your calculation!"

When Artpe heard his words, the corner of his mouth lifted as he smiled. Yes, this was the moment he had been waiting for. From a deep place inside his soul, the instincts of the Four Heavenly king boiled up to the surface. He started bluffing hard!

"Of course! From the beginning to the end, I've calculated everything!"

Of course, he was lying.

The lord's whole body shook at such ruthless and evil calculations made by the magician.

However, it didn't take him too long to nod his head.

Chapter 58

Lunatic Wave (4)

“Since we are going to do this... We have to be as discreet as possible.”

“I’m not sure what you are trying to say. I said the possessions of the guests would be damaged during the heat of the battle, but I never said I would do something myself.”

“What?”

The lord had hardened his heart. He finally convinced himself to go along with Artpe’s suggestion, yet Artpe had given him such a shameless answer.

When the lord was about to answer him, an enormous merchant ship that was docked near them started to sink

This was happening despite the fact that the monsters were still being held back at the 1st barrier walls!

“You...”

“Amazing! I never expected to see a sea monster that can attack from long distance would make its appearance!”

“There is no way anyone would believe such bull... hoohp.”

The lord was using his reasonable part of his brain to tackle this issue. However, he shut his mouth when Artpe gave him a sharp look. Mycenae acted as if she had already stopped listening to the conversation. She started mounting her ballista on the wall.

“Ee-yah. It is an incredibly strong monster. That, that and that... Those boats are all sinking.”

“Customer, it looks as if you are enjoying this more than anything I’ve seen you do before. Am I mistaken?”

“I... it is a terrifying monster. It’s a terrifying monster. Yes, a monster...”

Everything could always be justified by using force. The lord was holding back tears. He knew the truth, yet he couldn’t reveal the truth. Artpe ignored him as he used his Mana Strings to sink the ships in order.

He made holes in the hull of some ships, and he capsized others. Artpe possessed the Read All Creation ability, so he could clearly see the internal structure of the ships. He was able to easily sink a ship by lightly swinging his Mana Strings.

“W... what the hell is going on...”

“T... the attacks are coming from unexpected places! Everyone be prepared!”

“The ships are all sinking... How are they doing that!”

The soldiers and knights had been busily running around on top of the wall when they caught sight of the sinking ships in the coastal waters in front of Frate. The sight boggled their minds.

What would happen if a monster with such overwhelming power attacked them instead of boats? Strangely, this particular monster was focused on sinking ships rather than killing humans!

“The ocean is already crawling monsters, so we can’t run away through that route. However, they are specifically targeting the ships...”

“The Lunatic Wave came much earlier than expected... It will be hard year. However, we gained something when they sunk all our ships! Isn’t that right, lord!”

“Lord!”

Everyone on the 1st barrier wall turned to look at the lord. He knew the dirty and evil truth, so he didn’t have to fake his bitter expression. He raised his voice.

“We’ll activate the 2nd tier barrier wall! Everyone aside from the members manning the 1st barrier should all come with me!”

“Yes, sir!”

“We will follow our lord!”

The fighting spirit of the humans were boiling upwards. The lord had a heavy expression on his face. It was as if he was asking himself, ‘Is it really alright to do this?’

However, it was true that they had gained more time by following Artpe’s instructions. The extra time was precious in defending against the monsters. The lord let out a bitter laugh as he lowered his head towards Artpe.

“Magician, may I leave the 1st tier of barrier walls in your care?”

“Of course. You should withdraw everyone from here. You should divert them to the 2nd and 3rd tier barrier walls. No, it isn’t just the barriers. Don’t you have a lot to do within Frate?”

“The fact that you are here during a crisis makes me feel very reassured... Then I’ll leave this all to you.”

They had gained a lot of time thanks to Artpe, but this didn’t change the fact that they were still in a desperate situation. The lord hastily gathered all the soldiers and knights. They left to activated the 2nd tier barriers.

This meant the only ones facing the ocean on the 1st barrier wall was Artpe and Mycena. No one else had stayed behind.

“Huh?”

Artpe was flustered as he mumbled to himself.

“He really took everyone!?”

“That’s what you get for bluffing and acting high and mighty.”

Mycena grumbled as she loaded and shot her ballista. It pierced several monsters that surged up from the surface of the water. However, there were so many monsters that one could hardly notice the loss of these monsters.

“Anyways, you’ve already spoken those words, so you have to take responsibility. This might be obvious, but I cannot hold them back by myself.”

“Still, I never expected him to pull out everyone...”

As it was noted before, the 1st barrier wall was low in height. Since the Lunatic Wave had started not too long ago, the monsters they could see were small fries. However, monsters that could easily jump over the barrier would show up soon.

This was especially true for monsters that had the upper body of a human, and the tail of a fish.

When these monsters surged out of the water, their lower body changed into human legs. The merfolk were the greatest threat during the Lunatic Wave. When the merfolks made their appearance, it was fair to assume that the 1st tier of barrier was useless.

“I have to cover this large area by myself... Whatever. I’ll do it.”

He had been unable to break the habit of bluffing. It had carried over from his days as the Four Heavenly King. He could blame no one, but himself!

Moreover, it wasn’t as if he didn’t have a plan he could use for this scenario. Artpe admonished himself as he vowed to become a little bit more humble in the future. Then he activated his Mana.

“Customer, it isn’t too late to talk to the lord...”

“No, just wait.”

Artpe had an aggrieved expression on his face as he placed a hand on top of the barrier wall. He activated his Read All Creation ability, and he was meticulous in finding out the exact structure of the barrier wall that was separating the ocean and Frate. Mycenaë had no idea what he was trying to do, but she was getting more and more anxious.

“Customer, there are so many monsters gathered at the base of the wall that they’ll form a mountain.”

“Just wait.”

“Customer, I caught sight of mermen and mermaids in the distance.”

“Just wait.”

“Customer...”

“It is done.”

When Mycenae thought the barrier wall was going to fall in its entirety, Artpe was able to confirm the structure of the barrier wall. We succeeded in gathering all the information. When he raised his head, his frightening purple eyes flashed.

“Customer, that monster is about to cross over the barrier...”

“They won’t be able to come over now.”

As he confidently made the declaration, he activated a single magic. It was aimed at the point of contact between the barrier wall and the ocean waters. Basically, Artpe’s magic would be applied when the monsters tried to climb over the wall. It was the Hyper Rubbing spell. It had developed during the fight with the Demons, so it had reached an overpowering level of 49.

“Customer, did you just use that right now... Mmmm?”

“There are two ways of activating the Hyper Rubbing. The first method is to rub against a target. The second method is to impart the power of rubbing on a target.”

In the past, he had rubbed the floor to make it slick. He had used the first method to do this. The second method was used when he imbued the power of rubbing onto the soap during the shower.

Of course, it was possible to combine the two methods. This was seen when he used his Mana String whip. However, the method he was using right now was the second method.

“The ocean water... No, it’s the monsters!”

When he first learned Hyper Rubbing, all he could do was to rub his target in a vigorous manner. Even if he put in a lot of Mana into the spell, he couldn’t create a magic that could change one’s environment.

In the past, magicians thought about researching the Hyper Rubbing spell, but it was

useless in practical life. No one dared to use it in battle. This was why most could raise it to level 20 on average. Level 30 was the highest someone had developed it before. Artpe had also thought that level 30 was the limit of Hyper Rubbing.

[Koo-goo-rooooooooooooo!]

[Kee-ahhhhhhhhhk!]

However, he didn't have any of the spells that had been available to him in his past life. He had no choice, but to rely on the Hyper Rubbing spell. In turn, he had found ways to use the magic spell in real battles, and it had widened his repertoire. He realized a truth about the world through this meaningless magic, but his biggest achievement was the growth of the Hyper Rubbing spell. It wouldn't be an exaggeration if one called him the Emperor of Friction.

"T... the waves... New waves that seems to be resisting against the waves of the oceans are forming!"

"The friction causes vibration. As I control the Mana, I can control the cycle and intensity of the vibration."

The waves started small, but the waves kept adding to each other as the size of the waves grew larger. Artpe was raising the barrier wall as he controlled the vibration caused by the friction. He even controlled the waves that were forming as he grew the size of the waves.

[Kyahhhhhhhhhhk!]

[Kee-heeeeek! Kyahhhhk!]

This was occurring everywhere the barrier wall was installed!

"Amazing... You are too incredible, customer! Still, it would have been simpler if you used the magic spell that creates waves!"

"I don't have it! I don't have such magic!"

Artpe threw a tantrum as he created a bigger wave. Most of the weak monsters could not overcome the waves. They were pushed backwards. Even if monsters were strong enough to push past the waves, they couldn't withstand the incredible amount of

friction being created by the barrier wall. They were repelled.

In other words, Artpe was really defending the 1st tier barrier walls by himself.

“L... look over there.”

“Magician-nim has control over nature.”

“W... we shouldn’t be doing this right now ! While Magician-nim is buying us time, let us complete the 2nd tier barrier walls!”

However, Artpe wasn’t done yet. He had somewhat recovered the magical energy he had expended when he placed the Hyper Rubbing spell on the entirety of the barrier wall. He once again placed his hand on the barrier wall.

“Customer, you should help me now to snipe the monsters... What are you doing now?”

“Reinforcement.”

Artpe’s hand flashed, and a massive amount of Mana flowed out of him again. All of the Mana was put into the barrier wall. The barrier wall slowly started to vibrate more as it let out a purple light.

“Wait a moment. This isn’t an artifact. How are you going to use Reinforcement on a regular barrier wall... kyahhhhhhhhk!”

Mycenae had been doubting Artpe until the barrier wall started to shake. He easily took her by surprise again.

The 1st tier barrier walls were about to become obsolete, since the troop of mermen could easily overcome the low barrier walls. However, when the 1st tier barrier walls received Artpe’s Mana, the wall evolved at a fundamental level. Of course, its sturdiness had increased, but it also increased in overall size!

“All right. I think I can use Reinforcement twice on the wall in one sitting... I’m going again!”

“Kyahhhhhhhhhhk!”

Another round of purple light burst forward, and in a flash, the barrier wall surged

upwards! It was over 10 meters in height!

"Ohhhhhhhh! Magician-nim breathed his magic into the barrier!"

"It grew! It is about the same size as the 2nd tier barrier walls! Oh my god! What is his level!"

[Vibrating wall infused with the will to protect Frate+2]

[This nameless and plain barrier wall had been touched by the hands of a magician. The records of the people, who had fought in the past Lunatic Waves, were absorbed. The wall was born again, and this process affected the power of the special spell that was placed on the barrier wall. It turned into a large artifact that can emit vibration.]

Artpe let out an embarrassed laughter when the artifact was born. He hadn't expected it to work.

"Ha ha ha. I've done it again."

"Customer, you always cause trouble, but... The scale of this is too big!"

Artpe didn't need to maintain his Hyper Rubbing any more. The barrier wall had been given the power of vibration, so it could repel the weak monsters with waves by itself. Even if monsters could approach the wall, it could increase the intensity of its vibration to cause damage to the monsters. And to top it off, the barrier wall was too tall now. Monsters couldn't even attempt at jumping over the wall.

"Ah, the large troop of mermen are here."

"You are right. They are coming... They were a step too late."

The troop of monster mermen had confident expressions on their face as if to say, 'We'll just climb over that low barrier wall!'

They had an exquisite timing in making their appearance. It made one want to ask them if they were the main characters of this story.

[Goo-rooo-roo... Ooh-uhng?]

[High! It is high!]

They finally arrived at the 1st tier barrier walls. However, these weren't the human made walls that they had heard about from their mothers and fathers. They were baffled. The mermen froze as they came face to face with the massive barrier wall.

It was supposed to be a wall they could easily jump over...

[Ggoo-uhhhhhng! Wall! It hurts!]

[We can't cross it! The wall is insurmountable!]

[I want to go home!]

The troop of mermen and mermaids despaired at their twisted reality. Naturally, they took steps to avoid the reality. However, Artpe wouldn't let them do so. Mana Strings were emitted from the tip of his fingers. He no longer needed to maintain his Hyper Rubbing spell. He could slaughter them to his heart's content now!

[Koo-ahhhhhhhk!]

[Keeeeeeeek!]

"You aren't even worth much EXP, yet you dare to come here! Come back with stronger monsters!"

"Mmmm... It seems we no longer need the 2nd and 3rd tier barriers..."

Mycenae carefully observed her surrounding as she raised her ballista.

After two hours, the nobles from the other countries that had been occupied with the battle against the Demons came running towards the port. They despaired when they found no traces of their boats. They realized their ships had all sunk.

Even at that moment, not a single monster was able to cross the 1st tier barrier wall.

Chapter 59

Lunatic Wave (5)

“Artpe!”

“Oppa!”

The moment Maetel neatly annihilated all the Demons she came running towards the port. In a flash, she used her amazing jumping ability to climb atop the vibrating wall. It took her a single leap, and when she arrived at the top, she clung to Artpe. As if Sienna didn’t want to lose to Maetel, she tried to jump onto the wall, but her physical ability was inferior compared to Maetel. She had to push off once more midway up the wall.

“Artpe. You did this, right?”

“That’s right.”

“It is really high up here!”

Maetel’s Mana detection had always been exceptional, but it became much more sensitive as she traveled with Artpe.

She was like a hound that could smell anything that possessed Artpe’s Mana. When she saw the unique wavelength of his Mana being emitted in droves from the barrier wall, she knew his hands had touched the wall.

[Keeeeek! Come down here, humans!]

[L... listen to my song! Hear me sing!]

The more important fact right now was the fact that numerous monsters including mermen were unable to invade the territory of humans. This was thanks to the barrier wall being in the way.

Artpe and Mycenae were killing a massive amount of monsters, but the number of

monsters present in the ocean was growing. It was said that the ocean was a treasure trove of life, and this phrase was being proven right by the massive number of monsters that was continually growing.

It made one wonder if there was an end to this monster rush.

“We are fine for now. We’ll be able to relax until the barrier walls falls.”

“Ah. So that is why I saw people carrying out tasks all over the city instead of manning the wall.”

“I found it particularly reprehensible that they left everything to you... If an outsider saw this, one would think you were Frate’s lord.”

The residents of Frate had many tasks to do if they wanted to face the Lunatic Wave. Food had to be put away as reserve. Then they had to close several roads that could be used by the monsters once they entered the city. More barriers had to be erected on the roads.

However, this year’s Lunatic Wave had arrived so suddenly that they would have had to endure it with nothing but their body. However, Artpe had executed an effective plan that had given all humans within the city some time. It had given the humans some breathing room. It was unintentional, but Artpe was carrying out tasks that befit a hero.

“Artpe is too kind.”

Maetel had no idea how a wall could continuously vibrate and make waves without an outside source of Mana. However, she understood that many people would be saved thanks to what Artpe had done. However, Artpe decisively shook his head from side to side.

“I’m not kind. I just want to smash all the plans hatched by the Demon King. Moreover, I want to kill all the monsters, so I can monopolize the rewards.”

“Hoo-hoo.”

Whenever he got embarrassed, he always uttered such silly things. Maetel found that part about him to be endearing. Maetel was having such thoughts to herself. Artpe snorted as he avoided her gaze. As consequence, the blameless monsters were cut into

pieces by the Mana Strings.

Instead of flirting with Artpe, Sienna had decided to kill the monsters. However, when she caught sight of the mermen, she tilted her head in confusion. She asked Artpe a question.

“Oppa, they look like humans. They aren’t humans?”

“Mmm... I guess this is a good opportunity to give you this explanation.”

The mermen had pushed through the wave to approached the barrier wall. However, they couldn’t do anything, because of the vibration caused by the wall. Unlike the dog-headed Gnolls, the mermen had the ability to adapt. They gave up on trying to climb over the wall, and they focused on directly attacking the humans on top of the wall.

Their upper body looked human above the surface of the water, and their lower body was under the surface of the water. It made it very difficult to differentiate them from humans.

“In the case where monsters look like humans, it is mostly a ploy to take the humans off their guard. Since they look like humans, it causes humans to have a sense of kinship with these types of monsters. It drops the guard of the humans. These types of monsters use this weakness to attack their opponents.”

“Yes, I see. Is that how it is?”

Maetel was a cruel hero. When she determined her opponents were bad guys, it didn’t matter if her opponents were humans or non-humans. She ruthlessly cut them down. She tilted her head as she asked a question. Artpe brushed off her words as he continued to speak.

“There is nothing strange about monsters resembling humans. The dominant race of this land are humans. The important thing isn’t the appearance of the monsters. It is more about our mental attitude towards the monsters.”

“Artpe, that shouldn’t be a problem for us, right?”

Maetel once again let out a bright smile as she butted into the conversation.

“When they do bad things, we kill them. However, that doesn’t mean all monsters do

bad things!"

"...yes, that's right."

She got half of the answer right. Despite this fact, Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he nodded his head. He acknowledged her answer. For Maetel and Sienna, the depth of this answer was sufficient. The rest could be taken care of by Artpe.

'It would be great if good and evil can be determined in such a simple manner... The problem arises from the fact that not all monsters are evil. There are monsters that have developed their intelligence, so they have the self-control needed to suppress the urge to harm other creatures. Sometimes it is hard to determine the line between monsters and other foreign races. This problem comes up for discussion sometimes between humans and even the Demon race... Tsk. I can think about this later'

Artpe retracted such thoughts as he raised his head. Many mermen had thrown their body against the vibrating wall early on, so their body was dyed with their blue-colored blood. All their eyes had turned red, and they were throwing spears towards Artpe and Maetel. It seems these mermen were unable to control their base instincts.

There were many individual differences between Mermen. They were similar in that facet as the humans! However, none of them should have been affected by the Lunatic Wave. So they didn't have to think too hard before acting against the mermen!

"That is why we can just kill them all."

"Yes. Understood, oppa!"

Sienna let out a bright smile as she extended both her hands. She possessed a special Mana that was unique to her. She was the only person on this world, who possess it. Her Mana flowed through her body, and it gathered at her fingertips.

"Divine Punishment!"

She couldn't jump into the ocean to wage an underwater warfare. This was why she chose to use the attack magic of a priestess! She possessed a high rank class of Warrior Priestess, yet she hadn't been able to learn much specialized skills of her Class. However, she had learned a simple spell where she could smite her enemies by gathering her holy power.

“Divine Punishment! Divine Punishment! Divine Punishment!”

Normally, this attack magic was used to keep others in check. However, Sienna was able to overlap this weak attack magic multiple times to expand its power and area of effect. She was able to come up with a powerful magic on the spot, and the attack struck the ocean.

It was the same concept of waves adding to other waves to create an enormous wave. She combined several attack magic into one. She was able to cause meaningful damage to her targets!

[Kee-ahhhhhk!]

[It hurts! I want to go home!]

[Koo-hahk!]

Sienna’s overpowering magical energy washed over the ocean, and it inflicted stun effects to the monsters. If one didn’t know she was a Warrior Priestess, one would mistake her for a magician.

“She really does have talent for magic... Huh?”

Artpe was lamenting the fact that Sienna had been unable to traverse the road suited for her when he felt someone tugging at his sleeve. He turned to look behind him. It was none other than Maetel. Her cheeks were puffed out.

“Artpe, what should I do? There are too many monsters to target each of them with my long sword!”

“You can’t do anything here. You should make preparations. I’m sure the higher ranked monsters will show up later. You should eat and recover your stamina.”

“I’m not hungry yet!”

“Over here!”

“Everyone gather over here! The inner wall isn’t vibrating. Place the ladder here!”

Maetel was sulking in a major way as she stamped her feet. At that moment, humans

were climbing ladders to climb up the 1st tier barrier wall. The number of humans on top of the wall was steadily growing. These were foreign nobles, merchants and knights. They had just finished lamenting the fact that their boats had sunk to the bottom of the sea. Afterwards, they had come to the barrier wall with their fighting equipments.

Even if they were foreigners, they couldn't ignore the danger being faced by Frate!

"I'll help in the defense, magician-nim!"

"Magician, thanks to you this city... no, this country was saved. From now on, I will help you with everything I got!"

"...could you point out which son of a... Could you point out which monster sank our ships?"

Artpe put on a suitable business smile as he assigned them to various parts of the wall.

Maetel finally came to a big decision as she raised her head.

"I understand now..."

"You should go there... I told you I don't know which one did it. Salvage? You should ask your own country about that... Huh? What did you just say, Maetel?"

"It's been my dream of mine to enter into the ocean!"

She had suddenly made an offbeat announcement, Artpe was going to laugh it off. However, Maetel didn't give him the chance to reply to her words. She took couple short breaths before jumping off the barrier wall.

"Ee-yahhhhhhhhhhhhp!"

She didn't jump towards the inner part of the wall. She jumped outwards where it was teeming with hundreds of thousands of monsters! She jumped towards the location crowded by an overwhelming number of monsters.

"Oooh-ahhhhhh, Maetel!"

"Huhk! The berserker jumped into the ocean!"

“As expected of the berserker...! I’m sure of it. She is trying to just end her life through this fight!”

“I’m pretty sure she lost to the priestess in the quarrel for the magician’s love.”

Crazy nonsense were being spouted by the people around him. Artpe wondered if he should drop them all into the ocean, but he decided it wasn’t time to do that.

“Maetel, you idiot! Come back up here right now! If you had an artifact that allowed you to walk on water, you might...”

“Hoo-ahhhhhhp!”

As always, Maetel extinguished Artpe’s worries. When she was about to hit the surface of the water, she took a violent swing with her long sword. Three mermen were cut open, and she used the recoil of the attack to jump once again into the air!

“Eh-eet, hahp!”

[Koo-ahk!]

[Kyahhhhhk!]

It would have been disappointing if it had ended with a single attack. However, Maetel once again swung her sword right before she fell in a different location. This times she cut open four monsters.

She kept repeating it again, again and again!

“Uh...”

He had been about to use his Mana String to fish her out, but Artpe froze halfway in an awkward position. She said it had been her dream to enter into the ocean, yet there wasn’t a single drop of water on Maetel’s body. It was as if she was playing on dry ground. She was hopping across the water!

“That is... Uh...”

“Customer, what am I supposed to say when you look at me as if to say ‘how is that possible?’...”

"Unni is amazing..."

The fact that she was able to move around lightly without feeling the weight of her armor was the norm for her.

However, she currently had to take into account of the location of the monsters, their resistance to her attacks, the power of her swings, the recoil of her attacks hitting the surface of the water... The fact that she was able to calculate all of that factors before moving...

"...you want to try that, Alfred?"

"I'm sorry, lord. I'll die if I try that."

Artpe had wondered if other knights had Skills that would allow them to jump into the ocean. Fortunately, no swordsman or warrior was able to do so. Everyone was absentmindedly watching Maetel go ham on top of the ocean.

"Yes, it is as expected. She's the one that is strange. It is only her."

"This scene is worthy of being recorded in the history books. However, it does look unsightly!"

It really would have been a interesting sight if around 100 knights jumped into the ocean by following Maetel's example. He was a bit disappointed that he wouldn't be able to see it, but he tamped down on such thoughts.

At that moment, he saw an enormous shadow appear in the distant ocean.

"Mmmm..."

He felt an atmosphere that could only be felt when the final boss came out. Artpe hoped it wasn't the case, but when the enormous shadow entered into the range of his Read All Creation ability, his hope was dashed into pieces.

[Kraken]

[Level : 267]

"My goodness. This is nuts."

"What's wrong, customer? If we can hold out like this for several days, everything will be fine..."

Artpe let out a bright laughter as he answered Mycenaе's question.

"The Kraken has surfaced."

"...customer, you are really good at making a joke."

If she really thought he was joking, she wouldn't have put away her ballista. She was getting ready to run away. If it was Artpe's words, Mycenaе always trusted it to be true before asking any questions. It was a somewhat praiseworthy and cute.

"Where are you going?"

"Let me go!"

However, that was a separate issue. He wouldn't let her run away. Mycenaе had quickly packed her items. However, he firmly gripped her shoulder when she turned away.

"Mycenaе. Since, we've come this far together, let us meet our end together."

"You only say my name in an attentive manner in situations like this! Let me go! I have to live!"

"If you run away to the city, I'm sure there are Demons waiting for you."

"Ooh-ahhhhhh! Customer, you are bad! You are a bad guy!"

Mycenaе let out a cry. In the next moment, it was as if the monster was responding to her. A enormous tentacle appeared in the distant ocean.

The boss wave had begun.

Chapter 60

Kraken (1)

Kraken.

It was a monster that existed since the distant past. It was a large monster of the ocean. Over the numerous years, it had eaten its competitors to grow in size. It had the combination of overwhelming size and massive amount of magical energy. It was a calamitous monster. Sailors, who lived their entire life on the ocean, couldn't even catch sight of its shadow. Still, when it did show up, it destroyed everything and everyone in the region. This was why no one knew if it was a squid, an octopus or a crustacean. Still, this monster appeared frequently in legends.

[Kraken]

[Level : 267]

[Oooh-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

Moreover, this Kraken had shown itself in the ocean in front of Frate. It was still very far away, so Artpe could discern only two facts. The first fact was its level, and the second fact was that the Kraken was a squid.

“It has impeccable timing!”

“Oppa, is that edible?”

“Nope. However, we usually eat their kind.”

The humans had been about to coalesce into a unified front in an effort to face the monsters. It was supposed to be a tale of brotherhood and bravery amongst the humans. However, the final boss had shown up at that moment!

“There is no doubt about it! It’s the real Kraken!”

“Its legs are incredible big!”

“C... can it be?”

“Kraken!? It really is that dreadful being!”

The current situation was so unfair that it verged on being immoral. It wasn't the case where a final boss made an appearance to scare its opponents. It had locked in on Frate as its target, and it was making a beeline from the deep sea to the coast!

[Kee-heeeeeee!]

[It's here! That bastard is here!]

Humans weren't the only ones to shake from fear in the presence of the Kraken. The sea monsters had lost their mind as they coveted the inland, but they felt fear when they realized the Kraken was approaching them.

[We follow its words. Obey!]

[If we don't listen to it, we'll die. We'll all die.]

This was especially true for the mermen and mermaids. They spouted some nonsense about obeying the Kraken. It seemed there was a clear hierarchy between the Krakens and the mermen.

It was extremely rare for a monster of Kraken's caliber to appear in a Lunatic Wave. It seemed this Kraken was aggressive as it ruled over the mermen of this region. It seemed the Kraken was the leading this Lunatic Wave!

“Why did it have to show up this year!”

“Customer, let me go! Please!”

“No way. If we are going to stay alive, we do it together. If there are going to be any deaths, you will die alone.”

“Isn't that a roundabout way of saying you'll throw me out as bait, while you guys run away! I'm right, aren't I? Let me go!”

Mycenae was on the verge of tears as she fell to the floor.

In truth, she was well aware of the current situation. Once she decided not to run away, she couldn't escape the clutches of the Kraken.

Moreover, there was a record of her entering Frate. If she left solely on the basis that the city was a dangerous place to be, a huge crack would form in her qualification as a merchant. She would have thrown away her wares and customers in pursuit of her own safety. Even if she was able to survive through running away, it would be tough for her to be a merchant in the future.

"On the other hand, if you survive this, it might count as an Achievement."

"Achievement...?"

Artpe's words stopped Mycenaë's tears. A thought came to her when she heard his words.

"When you say Achievement... Are you perhaps..."

"When one is trying to gain a high rank Class, this requirement is more important than one's level."

"I have to put my life on the line if I want to move forward?"

"It is up to you to make the choice."

He didn't know how she felt about being a merchant. Since she was a Dark Elf, he was sure there was some backstory as to why she became one. On the other hand, she wouldn't be able to drop the Class easily. This was true even if her life was in danger.

"...how? Is there a method that'll allow us to win against such a powerful monster?"

In the end, she put strength into her two legs to stand up, and she carefully posed the question to Artpe. He let out a sigh as he gave an answer.

"I'm working through that problem right now."

Obviously, the humans in this place were of no help. The highest level amongst them was lower in level than Sienna. None of them could last a second against the Kraken. Moreover, there were only a very select number of people that could use magic. Artpe and the Dungeon Merchants were the only ones that could use magic.

“If the Kraken hits this barrier wall with its full strength, it’ll eventually fall.”

“Barrier wall... Reinforcement... That’s right! Wait a moment, customer!”

It seemed Mycenaе had come up with an idea. She desperately clung to him as she asked him a question.

“Customer, didn’t you say you could duplicate the effects of Reinforcements if you had Magic Stones?”

“I was talking about small items like my boots. If I want to further Reinforce such a large barrier wall, the amount of Magic Stones I would need...”

Artpe stopped mid-speech. Mycenaе was looking straight at him with incandescent eyes. This was the first time he had seen such sincere eyes since she had talked about the Eternal Forest with her Soul Contract in hand.

“Is it possible, customer?”

Was that the reason?

Artpe acted out of character by talking somewhat seriously towards her.

“...according to my calculations, the Kraken won’t be able to destroy or cross the barrier if I Reinforce it twice more.”

“Is it really possible for you to calculate the amount of Magic Stones you need?”

“I would need around 500 Magic Stones that is over level 200. It doesn’t matter what properties they possess. It just has to be a high rank Magic Stones that is over level 200.”

Magic Stones were rare drops from monsters. It was a crystallization of pure Mana.

Each Magic Stone possessed different properties, and since it was the purest form of Mana, it was often used as supplementary ingredients for artifacts. Of course, it was traded at high prices. As the level of monster it had dropped from increased, the price also increased precipitously.

Moreover, if one was talking about 500 Magic Stones that only dropped from level 200

monster and above...

"We could have bought every item put up for auction with that amount."

"Even if we empty all of Diaz, I question as to whether that much Magic Stones could be found."

"It'll show up. I'm sure it'll show up."

Mycenae spoke with strong conviction behind her words.

"Money can even summon ghosts."

"You..."

"I need to go and negotiate, customer. Please wait a moment. I'll be sure to bring all 500 of them."

Mycenae immediately turned around as she jumped off the barrier wall. However, it wasn't the sight of someone trying to run away. The sight of her retreating figure was something that could be seen only with a person that had put their life on the line.

"She's only an ajumma, yet she is trying to act cool..."

However, at that moment, he was sure of one thing. If they were able survive today's ordeal safely, Mycenae would be able to advance to the high rank Merchant Class.

'Yes, if we are able to survive today... '

The humans were running about in confusion at the appearance of the Kraken. Alongside the humans, the monsters were plunged into a state of confusion too. They were acting as if the world was ending today. As expected, the irresistible urge to run away tempted everyone.

At that moment, Maetel realized that the Kraken had made its appearance, so she hopped across the surface of the water. She returned to Artpe's side.

"Artpe, what should we do to catch that thing?"

"If we make the ocean boil, wouldn't it cook completely on its own?"

“Wa-ah. I bet that’ll be delicious!”

Maetel let out an innocent laugh at Artpe’s joke. In the next moment, her lily-white hand pinched Artpe’s cheek. Even in the corner of her smile, there was a small piece of rage that was infused within it. It was a rage that was suited for a Berserker.

“Ah-ya-ya.”

“I’m being serious right now. Artpe?”

“I’m being serious too. It would be great if someone would make the ocean boil.”

“How can there be a person in this world that can make the ocean boil!”

There weren’t any humans that could do it, but there were Demons that could pull it off. Artpe let out a sigh as he kept that answer to himself.

If Etna stepped forward to use her magic, she could solve this easily with one attack. However, she was under the Demon King’s shackles, so she couldn’t get directly involved in this matter. He frowned as he thought the world was really fucked up. Artpe spoke towards Maetel.

“I trust Artpe, but I also know that there are things that are impossible to accomplish in this world. Artpe, that is why...”

Maetel whispered in a small voice. It was small enough that Artpe and Sienna was the only ones that could hear her words.

“You have to tell me if we have no chance of winning. I’ll run away with Artpe and Sienna in tow.”

“You’ll leave everyone to their certain death?”

“The fact that people will die makes me sad, but if Artpe dies, my world loses meaning. Artpe is the one that taught me to choose what is more important to me.”

It seems she received unnecessary specialized education from him!

Artpe clicked his tongue as he flicked her forehead.

"I can't win against it, but I can make it retreat. So don't even think about running away."

"Yes, I'll put my trust in you. Just tell me what I have to do, Artpe."

"Oppa, I'm ready too!"

Maetel and Sienna had killed Demons in the auction house earlier, and their levels had risen thanks to it. Maetel was level 195, and Sienna's level rose to 174.

If a little bit more time had been given to them, they would have easily broken through level 200. This was to be expected of Maetel, but Sienna had also gone through an explosive growth. It was thanks to her power to dominate and kill strong enemies.

However, this didn't mean they weren't in danger.

"Since this is an absurdly dangerous task, a single mistake could kill you."

"What do I have to do?"

"You have to delay the Kraken as much as possible. You have to delay him as much as possible. You have to hit it with meaningful attacks to attract its attention, and you have to decrease its speed."

"..."

She knew it was a possibility, but once he gave the order for a direct assault, Maetel turned absentminded for a brief moment. She turned her gaze towards the ocean. The Kraken was still a long ways away, but it was charging towards them at terrifying speed. The sight of the Kraken filled her eyes.

She replied with a vacant voice.

"That guy...?"

"Yes. In this place, you are the only one that can pull this off."

Maetel had a high rank ability called Acceleration. The only one that could match the reaction speed of the vicious Kraken was Maetel with her Acceleration skill activated. Maetel was a genius where she could move on instinct. He confirmed this fact when

she moved across the ocean.

"Let's link our Mana. It'll allow you to use Acceleration to your heart's content. It'll allow you to stall for enough time."

"...I understand."

Artpe had told her to stall for time against a level 267 large monster, and she accepted his request. Both of them were already halfway crazy. However, the most crazy thing here was the situation they found themselves in.

"I'll give it a try. I'll go right now."

"The most important thing here is your life, Maetel."

Artpe took off Maetel's battle boots, and he put his black leather boots on her feet. When the artifact accepted the will of its owner, it shrunk in size to fit Maetel's feet.

"If it gets too dangerous, I want you to run away immediately. At that point, I'll abandon this place."

"Ah-ooooooh."

He told her the instructions on how to use the boots. Unfortunately, none of Artpe's words were reaching Maetel at this point.

"I... is this heaven? Ah-ooh! Heaven!"

Artpe's actions had broken through the threshold of Maetel's happy meter. He had placed her in heaven. When she didn't move, Artpe tapped her shoulder.

"Maetel? Hey!"

"...haht. Yes! I can do any tasks you ask of me now!"

"Are you all right...?"

"I'm completely fine! It feels like I'm walking in heaven!"

"You don't seem all right at all!?"

Maetel was facing Artpe, and her face was glowing. If the Kraken tried to take the boots off of her, she would probably use her superhuman strength to rip the Kraken into pieces. Artpe became worried. He was unable to pinpoint what he was worried about. Maetel left him behind as she quickly turned her body towards the ocean.

“I’ll go right now! Artpe? Do you mind if I kill it?”

When he heard her words, his worry started to spike uncontrollably!

“No. Don’t kill it. Run away! I told you to run away!”

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!”

Maetel’s energy had been fully charged. She didn’t listen to Artpe’s words as she jumped towards the ocean. She didn’t bother killing any monsters. She charged forward as she used either the head of the monsters or the head of the spears as stepping stones! She was charging with such ferocity that it made one wonder if she would really just kill the Kraken.

‘However, there is always a gap between reality and ideals...’

The fact that heroes overcame all impossible situations was something that was only possible in old stories.

If one wanted to turn the impossible into possible, one had to turn one’s eyes away from one’s ideals to face the uncomfortable reality.

He turned around with a hardened expression on his face. He faced the other girl, who was waiting for her orders.

“Just tell me what to do, oppa!”

“Sienna.”

“Yes!”

Sienna spoke with a dependable voice. If he asked her for the stars in the night skies, she would have gotten them for him. It was probably safer for her if he had asked her for the stars. Instead, he asked her to do a task that was much more dangerous.

“...actually, you’ll have to face someone that is more dangerous than Maetel’s opponent.”

“Huh? There is a more dangerous opponent here than the squid?”

“She isn’t our enemy right now, but that’s right.”

In truth, Artpe had told Mycenae a single lie.

He would need to consume 500 Magic Stones from monsters over level 200 if he wanted to Reinforce the barrier wall twice. He told the truth up until that point.

However, the two additional Reinforcement had no chance of holding off the Kraken. He needed to Reinforce it one more time. Moreover, he had to Reinforce the barrier wall with a property that was completely opposite of the Kraken. Artpe would have to execute the world’s strongest and splendid Reinforcement.

The supplementary ingredient needed for this Reinforcement was simple.

“I want you to take this letter to Jaime’s Inn located in C Sector.”

“Jaime’s Inn located in C sector...”

Sienna repeated his words as she took letter he had written during the few minute break. Then he spoke with a desolate smile on his face.

“You will find a woman waiting there for me. Tell her that I want to hold her hand once.”

The third supplementary ingredient for the Reinforcement was none other than the magical energy of the Fire Witch Etna.

Chapter 61

Kraken (2)

“Magician-nim!”

After he sent off the two girls to different locations, it didn’t take too long for Artpe to be surrounded by numerous people. They came in waves. The inner city should be safer than the top of the wall, yet people were convinced that the safest place was near Artpe.

“Magician-nim, please look at the Kraken!”

“Do something! I beg of you! We don’t have the power to do anything against the Kraken, magician-nim!”

“Magician-niiiiiiiiim!”

When he saw the people blindly cling to him, he thought about what happened one year ago in the mountain village. At that time, they begged for his help. They had looked at him with desperate eyes.

They didn’t care what price Artpe and Maetel would have to pay in order to help them. Even if they knew it, they had acted as if they were ignorant of that fact. Since the two of them had the power, the people had acted as if it was a given that Maetel and Artpe would have to help them...

“Stop sticking so close to me. Get off of me.”

Artpe dislodged them using his cold voice, and he extended a finger. He pointed towards the location where the 3rd barrier wall was being erected. The lord of Frate was standing near it, and it looked as if his soul had been sucked out by the appearance of the Kraken. One could also see the Dungeon merchant Mycena, who was trying to hold the lord’s attention as she gave a desperate speech.

“Even if you guys pool all your powers together, you won’t be able to do anything against the Kraken. It is the same for me. I have no chance of mixing it up with the

Kraken with my bare body. If you want to survive, you have two choices. You can try to avoid the Kraken coming ashore by running away towards the mountainous regions. Or you can give that merchant what she needs."

"However, that merchant is spouting nonsense! We are in a dangerous situation, yet she is trying to make profit off of the trade..."

The man went into a lengthy speech.

However, the argument could be simplified into this.

Level 200 Magic Stones were items in high demand, yet the supply was extremely limited. This was why many sellers of Magic Stones colluded with each other to fix the price. However, their rivals were present here, so it would be impossible to fix the price.

"So what price will you be satisfied with?"

"Money isn't important! We are talking about my family's Magic Stones. It isn't something that should be sold in bulk. I have to find the proper owner..."

"How much?"

"I... I would have to receive 15 thousand gold each..."

"...what?"

It was idiotic to boost the price of an item that was hard to trade. However, Artpe was sure of one thing. There was no way a level 200 Magic Stone was worth over 5,000 gold.

Mycenae told him she would take care of everything with money. However, she probably never expected the nobles to act like this. Even Artpe thought it was ridiculous.

"I'm the one who asked her to acquire the Magic Stones. You all probably know this, but it is impossible to fight off the Kraken with the power gathered within this city. The best way to stop its charge is through the barrier wall. However, a barrier of this caliber can't withstand the Kraken. I have to Reinforce it using a lot of high rank Magic Stones. If not, this city and the people within it will be smashed into pieces."

"Still, you are talking about 500 Magic Stones..."

"That is why you aren't cursing out the merchant. You are bad mouthing me. Well, let me ask you this. Am I the one trying to profit from this dangerous situation? Or is it you guys?"

Artpe's gaze was bottomless. It was hard to think of him as a 14 year old. He was oozing with charisma, and it prevented the people from arguing with him. They shut their mouths. This was an ability that existed only in true heroes. Artpe was really annoyed right now, so he didn't realize this fact.

"But..."

"Koo-hmmm. Kmm, kmmm..."

Despite his words, they refused to open their mouths in the end.

Some wondered if the magician was lying to screw over the foreigners. Others wondered if Reinforcing the barrier wall was really the only way out of this. There were countless excuses running through their heads, and Artpe could clearly see through all of them. He wasn't using his Read All Creation ability. In the past, he had countless encounters with such people, so his prior experience let him know what they were thinking.

A bitter smile appeared automatically on his lips.

"Hoo-ooh... Humans really the same whenever or wherever you encounter them."

"But magician-nim..."

"Fuck off. Get out of my sight."

If he acted on his emotions, he would have thrown the lot of them into the ocean. However, Mycenae asked him to leave it all to her. He wouldn't step forward until she asked for his help.

Artpe turned his head away. These humans refused to give anything, yet they still expected protection from Artpe. He looked at the battle that was occurring on the ocean.

It was said one should be thankful for small mercies. After the Kraken had made its appearance, the other monsters became timid. There were monsters that were barely able to move in the presence of the Kraken. Even as the humans were running about in confusion, no monsters were able to cross the vibrating wall.

“Maetel...”

After he finished assessing the situation, his eyes naturally turned towards her.

Maetel was speeding across the ocean. She was quickly approaching the Kraken. Once Maetel decided to do something, she showed no hesitation or fear.

If she wasn't a hero, no one was qualified to be a hero. Even though he was still in a dangerous situation, he chuckled.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhng!]

Kraken let out a roar. The wave containing its Mana spread across the ocean, and it attracted more and more monsters to the shores of Frate.

A portion of the monsters were swept up by the Kraken's tentacles, and they were eaten. The rest followed behind it.

It seemed the Kraken wasn't planning on dragging this out. It was filled with the will of wanting to end this quickly.

“Hoo-ahhhhhhp!”

At that moment, Maetel bravely got in its way. While she kept the momentum of speeding across the ocean surface, she put her magical energy into her long sword. She shot out a beam of energy!

She decided to take this approach, because she came to the conclusion that she would bounce off the Kraken if she attacked head-on.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhh!]

She was a hero approaching level 200, so her strike was effective against the Kraken. She had worried the Kraken would just shrug off her attack. She had worried it would continue to charge forward. Fortunately, it stopped moving when it received Maetel's

attack!

“Not yet! Stay there!”

[Koo-ahhhhhng!]

The Kraken was pissed off. It swung its house-sized tentacle towards Maetel. However, Maetel followed Artpe’s advice as she used her Acceleration skill to avoid its attack. Then she used her beam again!

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

The energy construct was emitted from the tip of the long sword, and it traveled in a straight line. It split open the forehead of the Kraken as dark blood started to flow.

Everyone had given up when they saw the overwhelming size of the Kraken. However, the people of Frate let out a cheer when Maetel’s attack wounded the Kraken.

Artpe coldly assessed the damage, and he shook his head from side to side.

“The damage is akin to being pricked on the finger with fish bone.”

“You speak in such hopeful terms.”

He had spoken those words to himself. He hadn’t wanted anyone else to hear it, yet someone replied to his words. Artpe let out a sight. An out of breath woman had just climbed up to the wall. He raised his hand towards Mycenae as he asked a question.

“Did you gather all 500?”

“Not yet. I’ve gathered around 180. I contacted the Anywhere company’s headquarters, and the outcome was positive. Moreover, I was able to receive support from the Diaz kingdom’s nobles. However, it was as you’ve said. The problem came from...”

“There is a limit to the supply of Magic Stones that could be gathered in Diaz. I knew this would happen. In the first place, the appearance of monsters over level 200 is very low here.”

Still, the nobles and the merchants from foreign countries that could make up the

insufficient supplies were also gathered here. Artpe took the pouch containing the 180 Magic Stones. It was unfortunate, but it might still be possible to accomplish the 1st Reinforcement.

“So what are you going to do? These pigs are refusing to sell their Magic Stones.”

“No, they will sell it to us.”

There was still a bright light twinkling within her eyes. Her eyes swept over the nobles and merchants gathered atop the barrier wall. She just noticed that most of them were from foreign countries. It seemed the greedy ones had sharp eyes for assessing the situation. They decided not to hide in the city. They were on the front line, yet they decided they were safest near the strongest being within Frate.

“Everyone. Please I beg of you once again. The communication magic and the item summoning magic will be provided by the headquarters of the Anywhere company. We promise to help you out in gathering the items. We are willing to buy the Magic Stones of level 200 monsters for 6,000 gold. You aren’t selling it for a loss.”

“Who are you to demand this of me! I can’t sell it at that price. It will drop my family’s name into the mud!”

“Six thousand gold? Ha! If the participants of the last Magic Stone auction within the capital heard of that price, they would have all mocked you! Fifteen thousand gold! There is no way I can go under fifteen thousand gold!”

Fifteen thousand gold.

It seemed this was the highest price the Magic Stones had sold in their country. He couldn’t believe how foolish these people were. Artpe was looking around the crowd when he had a realization. The ones asking for a high price for the Magic Stones were part of the leadership group that represented each country’s trade administration. The nobles and the merchants knew their future were up in the air right now, but even if they wanted to make the sale, they were afraid of crossing these important figures. They couldn’t easily step out of line.

“Hoo. I see. Is everyone of the same opinion?”

“So you want us to take all the loss?”

Even if they had ideas of selling the Magic Stones for less than 15 thousand gold, they couldn't do so if some were able to sell it for the price of 15 thousand gold. Greed would naturally rise from within them. That was why all the humans gathered here planned on sticking together. They planned on insisting on the price of 15 thousand gold.

Even the Anywhere company would go bankrupt if they bought 320 Magic Stones for the price of 15 thousand gold. Mycenae no longer tried to convince the nobles and the merchants. She looked straight at Artpe as she spoke.

“Artpe-nim.”

“What?”

Until now, she had always referred to him as customer. He had no idea what changed her mind, but he willingly went along with her request.

“It seems their argument hinges on the fact that they don't believe the barrier wall could be Reinforced again. If you show them the evidence, they might take my words a little bit more seriously.”

“Do you really believe that? Even if I use Reinforcement in front of their eyes, it looks as if they'll come up with a different excuse.”

“I'll deal with it somehow once we reach that point.”

“Ha!”

Good.

She was showing a backbone that befits a hero's exclusive merchant.

Artpe didn't reply to her words. He just grinned as he threw the pouch containing the Magic Stones into the air. The string on the pouch loosened, and the 180 Magic Stones letting out prismatic radiance scattered into the air.

“W... what the hell!”

“Each of them are treasures worth over several thousand gold...!”

“M... magician-nim! What are you trying to do...”

“Watch this well. You won’t be able to act ignorant after this.”

Artpe placed one hand on the barrier wall. The scattered Magic Stones landed all over the barrier wall, and he activated his Reinforcement skill.

“W... wait a moment.”

“It really...?”

In a flash, the barrier wall let out a brilliant purple light as the wall started to vibrate. The 180 Magic Stones started to turn into pure magical energy in ones and twos. They were being absorbed into the barrier wall!

“Hoo-ooh...”

“Wait a moment.”

The purple light swallowed all the Magic Stones, and for a brief moment, silence blanketed the surrounding. The people on the wall were dumbfounded. They had just witnessed Magic Stones worth several hundred thousand gold disappear in a flash. It happened when they were about to speak.

“Magician-nim, what are youuuuuuu-uhhhhhhhh?!?”

“Ggoo-ahhhhhhhhhk!”

All the light was absorbed into the barrier wall, and it shot up several dozen meters!

“Be careful! Don’t fall over the wall!”

“T... the port is being destroyed! Everyone grab onto the barrier wall!”

“My god... Even the corpses of the monsters...”

In the process of Reinforcing the barrier wall, the wall absorbed everything it was lacking from its surrounding. It absorbed the Records of its surrounding to expand its size. It hardened and consolidated the change, and a much stronger power of vibration emanated from the wall.

It resulted in forming an overpowering barrier wall. The 2nd and 3rd tier barrier walls couldn't hold a candle to this one. Originally, the barrier wall was simply made out of stone. However, after it went through three Reinforcements, the wall was infused with a black purple light. There was a metallic sheen to the wall. It displayed its dignified presence.

[Frate's Guardian Wall+3]

[Owner : Artpe]

[The desire of the people wanting to protect the country and city was consolidated through the power of the great magician. A jumbo artifact was created by him. Most monsters will be unable to approach the wall thanks to the the powerful vibration emitted by the wall. If the owner desired it, the wall can decrease in size to increase its strength.]

“My god.”

“T... the barrier wall did get higher...”

“The Magic Stones... All those Magic Stones are gone. It seems the merchant wasn’t lying!”

Of course, the power of the Reinforcement skill was amazing. Still, Artpe never expected to be given the ownership of the wall!

Still, he felt tears coming to his eyes when he thought about the amount of Magic Stones he had to consume to accomplish this!

“It’s high.”

“The monsters clamoring below look like trash from up here...”

Not even the mermen... no, even the Mer-King would be unable to approach a barrier of this caliber. The past Lunatic Waves would have had to pack up and retreat if they had to face this barrier wall.

However, even this barrier wall could only last 5 minutes against the Kraken.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhng!]

“No! You can’t come this way!”

Maetel was still holding out against the Kraken. However, the Kraken refused to stop its charge as it dealt with Maetel. The distance between the Kraken and Frate was contracting. If it wasn’t for Maetel, the Kraken would have already reached inland.

“You saw it, right! If he Reinforces it one more time, he can stop the Kraken! We aren’t forcefully taking your Magic Stones away for you! We are paying a fair price for them! Your Magic Stones can save your own lives! It can save this city, country and even the continent!”

“Koo-hmm. However, there is no guarantee he’ll be able to succeed in replicating this effect again...”

“Magician-nim, it isn’t as if I don’t trust you... It is hard to believe that such a vast amount of Magic Stones were consumed.”

“Even if the wall becomes sturdier, can it really hold off the Kraken?”

Mycenae grinded her teeth. Even in such a situation, the humans were trying to find a way to weasel out of everything. They were being threatened with death, yet these dim-witted people were unable to let go of their possessions!

“This auction has already been a bust! Still, you can think of it as your money saving your own lives! It isn’t a situation where even one of us should be backing off! How long are you all going to take a back seat!”

“The ship I took to get here was sunk. I’ve already taken a massive financial hit. That’s right Sir Frantz hasn’t taken any losses yet. I also heard that his family has a pretty good amount of Magic Stones...”

“Ah, it isn’t like that. I don’t possess any of them. The head of the family has it firmly within his grasp, so I don’t possess the authority to...”

The nobles had nowhere to run anymore, so they started selling each other out. If 320 Magic Stones were gathered, the rest of them would be off the hook from selling their Magic Stones. Each of them struggled desperately to be in the latter group. It was hard to listen to their words.

“...I now know all your intentions. I’ll give up on purchasing the Magic Stones.”

Mycenae was cold and firm with her words. It stopped the bickering between the nobles and the merchants. When a brief silence descended, Mycenae took couple breathes before she raised her head. The light in her eyes was terrifying.

However, she didn't look at the other people gathered atop the wall. She looked straight at Artpe as she asked a question.

"Artpe-nim. I will be sure to give you the money later with interest. Do you have any interest in selling your product?"

"What product?"

If an answer akin to a soul came out of her mouth, it would have horrified everyone. However, she spoke the name of a more terrifying product.

"I'm talking about this barrier wall. In truth, I spoke to the lord of Frate before coming here. I've confirmed with him that he decided to give the ownership of this barrier wall to Artpe-nim."

"...ho-oh."

A single strand of smile appeared on Artpe's lips when he heard her words. He now knew Mycenae and the lord of Frate had come up with this ploy. They had guessed things might turn out like this with the nobles and the merchants. It seemed things were rolling along as she planned!

"What price do you think I should ask for it?"

"Whatever you want."

"I like how you think."

Everyone could only watch as the negotiation continued between Artpe and Mycenae. They didn't even have to ask to know what would happen in the future.

"All right. I'll sell you this wall. I'm assuming the Reinforcement fee will be given separately?"

"If I do agree to pay that price, will you help punish those that infringe upon my private property rights?"

"Private property rights. I like that word."

Artpe and Mycenae looked at each other as they smiled.

The nobles and the merchants finally realized that they had no choice from the start.

Chapter 62

Kraken (3)

“I... I’ll sell it for 6,000 gold.”

“Yes, I’ll sell it too. You cheap and dirty...!”

The nobles and merchants finally changed their attitudes when they became afraid. There was a real possibility of being thrown off the barrier wall now. They’ve been trying to convince Artpe that their main houses didn’t possess any Magic Stones, or they talked about not having the authority to sell the Magic Stones. In a flash, they had changed their tune. It was as if they had convinced the head of their families through telepathy.

However, the price of items changed in a fluid manner. In fact, there were cases where the role of buyers and seller could switch. The nobles and merchants were still unaware of this possibility.

“No, I’m the one that’ll be selling.”

“W... what are you selling?”

“What am I selling?”

“Have you finally lost your mind?”

Mycenae’s cold voice entered into the ears of all the humans gathered atop the barrier wall. Her words flowed like water. It was as if she had prepared her words beforehand.

“I’m selling the rights to be protected by this barrier wall. All the citizens, nobles and merchants of Diaz had helped in acquiring the Magic Stones. They are also carrying out various tasks like cleaning up the city. They have paid the price. As it so happens, the foreign nobles and merchants gathered here haven’t contributed anything.”

“What? This is a structure that is part of the lay of this land. How can you claim rights to it...”

“Ah, this isn’t just a structure.”

Artpe grinned as he placed his hand on the wall. The enormous barrier wall started to slowly contract in size. The nobles felt the change, and they were taken aback.

“If I wanted, I can reduce the size of the barrier wall. It is possible for me to install this anywhere I want. That’s right. I can move this barrier back to where the 3rd tier barrier is right now, so I can protect only the people that has the rights to be protected.”

“M... my god...”

“This doesn’t make any sense! How can you decrease the size of the enormous wall through just your will!”

“You want to test me?”

Artpe’s laughter deepened. The barrier wall decreased further in size, and it reached a point where the monsters clamoring in the ocean could realistically think about jumping over the wall.

[Kyahhhhhhk!]

[They are coming towards us. We have to produce some kind of result or we will be punished!]

[Kill them! We have to kill them!]

It was unknown as to what kind of connection there was between the Kraken and the mermen, but they started throwing their spears towards the top of the wall. It was hard to tell if they were screaming or yelling as they threw their spears! A lucky throw of the spear hit a knight on his helmet. Everyone on the wall ducked.

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhk!”

“I... I’ll buy it! I’ll buy the right to be protected by this wall!”

“I’ll buy it too!”

In truth, he was already at his limits as to how small he could make the barrier wall.

As the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings, his Bluff skill had pierced the heavens as to how good it was. He had activated his skill, and he had delivered a critical hit. Everyone present really believed he could move this wall to wherever he wanted!

"All right. I'll take 3 level 200 Magic Stones from each of you. I will provide the communication magic and the transfer magic for free. Let us start the trade."

This was how Mycenae was able to acquire Magic Stones needed to Reinforce the barrier wall without making any payments. She was actually able to acquire more Magic Stones than the number he needed. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he watched the people desperately try to contact their home country and main family.

"It really seems humans can't come to their senses unless they are pushed to the edge of the cliff."

"Isn't it? They are really detestable."

"It is also true that you tried to make a profit when the possibility of a trade became assured. You are the same as them."

If it wasn't for Artpe's bluff, Mycenae's plan would have been blown into pieces. He rolled his Mana String into round ball, and he gave a light blow to Mycenae's head. She grumbled as she pouted.

"Do you know how much I've already invested into this venture? If this deal hadn't worked out, I might have had to give up on being a merchant. I would have had to run away. In my attempt to gain Achievement for my high rank Class, I might have lost everything. If it hadn't worked out, I would have been so depressed that I wouldn't have been able to shove bread down my throat."

When he listened to her, he realized she had a point. It was true that he had been able to acquire 500 Magic Stones thanks to her. That was why he decided not to interrogate her any further.

"There is only one problem left... Etna isn't here yet?"

When he successfully used his Reinforcement again, everyone believed that they would be saved. In truth, this was a dud if Etna wasn't there.

'Etna, let's hold hands this once. I was so careful as to not go against the conditions of

the Absolute Control...!"

The Kraken was close enough to Frate that the civilians within the city could see it. Artpe watched as Maetel desperately tried to block the Kraken. She was giving it all including using her Acceleration and Blink. He unconsciously clenched his fists.

"Hoo-ooh... Hooht! Ha-aht!"

[Goo-wuhhhhhhhh!]

Usually, the user of the Acceleration ability suffered from the enormous aftereffect that came with using the ability. The aftereffects increased when one used it more and more. Currently, Maetel hadn't just used the ability once or twice. She had used it over several dozen times, and she was using it in rapid succession.

Even if he was providing her with his Mana, the damages caused when using the ability couldn't be shouldered by Artpe. It was clear to Artpe's eyes that Maetel was slowing down.

'Shit... I guess it really was too much for us. Should I just run away with them? All right. If she doesn't show up when Maetel uses two more Acceleration, I won't look back...'

At that moment, a mature voice of a woman could be heard in his ears. She wasn't the main character, yet she had made her entrance with exquisite timing!

[Artpe.]

[Etna, you... Message magic?]

Artpe's expression crumpled. As soon as he heard the message magic, he activated his Read All Creation ability. He confirmed that she hadn't come anywhere near the barrier wall. She was using a long distance method to deliver her message. In the end, it meant that she wasn't going to show herself here!

[I want to make this clear... I might be able to do so after all of this concludes. However, I can't step forward right now. If you come to me, I can hold your hand. However, it is impossible for me to approach you first. It is impossible for me to hold your hand.]

"...shit."

It seemed the Demon King's Absolute Control placed on her had become more complex than the one from his previous life. Artpe grinded his teeth as he tried to figure out what he should do. Then he picked up on a clue from her words.

[Wait a moment. I can hold your hand if I go to you?]

[...yes]

Of course, Artpe couldn't leave his place atop the wall. However, it seemed being observed by other people was the only reason why she couldn't come here. If there was a way to bring her magical energy to him...

'Can I do this through the Mana String?'

Until now, he had used his Mana String to connect himself to an item or someone else. He had never made a connection between two separate entities. He had never attempted it in the past, but it was possible.

[All right. I'll send it to you.]

[Huh? Send?]

First, he made several dozen Mana Strings, and he connected the ends to the barrier wall. He sent the other end straight towards where Etna was hiding.

[Oh my? This contains your Mana. It was generated using your Mana... What the hell is this? It is an incredibly high rank magic!]

Artpe knew Etna had sufficient ability to be able to identify the Mana String. As expected, she reacted immediately.

Artpe sent her a firm and short message.

[I want you to grab that.]

[...Artpe, I thought you wanted to hold my hand?]

Had she expected some kind of romantic gesture? Etna answered him, and he could hear disappointment in her voice. Still, she obediently grabbed onto the Mana String. Artpe felt a thrill when the Demon King's innate ability didn't activate.

“Artpe-nim, I brought the rest!”

“You have excellent timing. This is very good.”

He already had prior experience of doing two Reinforcement at once! He immediately took the pouch from Mycenae, and he threw it into the air. At the same time, Etna’s oppressive magical energy of fire rode along the several dozen Mana Strings. It was being transferred into the barrier wall!

However, it didn’t end there. Maetel was desperately calling out his name from across the wall!

“Artpe, I’m at my limits! I can no longer stall it!”

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Kyahh. That side has impeccable timing too! Shit!”

The Kraken sensed a massive amount of Mana being concentrated at the barrier wall. It gave up on killing Maetel, and it charged straight for Frate. The Kraken hadn’t been too far from the port, so its enormous body rammed into the barrier wall before Artpe could activate his Reinforcement skill!

[Koo-ahhh-ohhhhhhh!]

“Kyahhhhhhk! Ah, Artpe-nim! Hurry! Hurry!”

“Magician! Magicia-ahhhhhhhh!”

The effect of the attack was amazing! Just a single charge from the Kraken put a crack in the barrier wall, which had been Reinforced three times. The Kraken’s tentacles were thick, and it was dozen meters long. They shot forward like waves as the tentacles threatened the people atop the wall!

“Uh. Uh-hoo.”

“Kraken. T... the Kraken is right in front of our noses.”

“Magician-nim! Magician-nim!”

Its truly devastating destructive ability and the visual it presented drove the people out of their minds. Artpe bit his lips when it looked as if the tentacles were threatening to climb over the wall.

“I can’t move while I use Reinforcement. Maetel, do something!”

“Eeek. I understand. I’ll try!”

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhh!]

[We follow its order!]

[We cannot refuse. Kill the human!]

Maetel dragged her tired body forward as she tried to desperately interfere with the Kraken, but the school of mermen got in her way.

“You dare! You guys should all disappear!”

[We won’t sink alone.]

[We will take you down with us, human!]

Maetel had raised her Berserk to its peak state, and she was cutting down everything in her path. However, the number of mermen crowding the coastal waters were overwhelming. She kept swinging her sword, yet there was no daylight.

“Eeeeek!”

“Shit. It’s shaking...!”

Artpe was so frustrated that he was about to lose his mind. He was successful in incorporating Etna’s Mana and the Mana of the Magic Stones. Everything had been going smooth, and he just needed to complete his Reinforcement Skill. However, he was having a hard time progressing in his Reinforcement when there were interruptions.

“A little bit faster... Shit...!”

Artpe was repairing the shaking wall in real time as it took the Kraken’s full powered

attacks. At the same time, he was trying his best to continue the Reinforcement. It wasn't enough. At this rate, the wall would fall before he could finish his Reinforcement!

"I'll be there, oppa!"

Sienna had been tasked to lure Etna. She had been successful in her mission, and she arrived at that moment. She jumped atop the barrier wall in one fell swoop, and she let out a sonorous shout. Her two hands were filled with magical energy, and she was holding up a sledge hammer that was letting out light.

"Unni did it, so I can do it too!"

"Sienna... You... Hey!"

It was reminiscent to what Maetel did earlier. Sienna dived towards the ocean! Fortunately, the mermen were focused on Maetel, and the Kraken was focused on the barrier wall. No one was paying attention to her.

"Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!"

It was surprising as to the degree in which no one paid any attention to Sienna. When she was about to collide, she focused all her magical energy into her sledge hammer. She brought it down on the Kraken's head!

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhh!]

At that moment, the Kraken had been filled with the thought of destroying the barrier wall. It suddenly came to a stop as all its tentacles writhed in pain. Sienna hadn't reached level 170 yet, but she had caused a debilitating pain to be felt by the Kraken. It was a surprising turn of event. She might have caused more damage than Maetel.

"Good job, Sienna!"

If he had his Read All Creation ability activated, he could have seen how this was possible. However, he had more important things to do! Artpe didn't lose this chance to further his Reinforcement. Etna was still connected to the barrier wall. She gritted her teeth as she sent him a message.

[How much of my magical energy are you planning on taking!]

[I just wanted to hold your hand, so I have no idea.]

[We aren't holding hands, you swindler!]

His magical energy, Etna's magical energy and the magical energy of 320 Magic Stones coalesced into one. The magical energy morphed into a state that was suitable for the Reinforcement skill, and it spread throughout the barrier wall. In a flash, two successful Reinforcement had occurred!

[Hellfire Sentinel+5]

[Hellfire was infused to complete the barrier wall. Any being below level 200 cannot damage the wall. In the case of water or ice type beings, one would have to be at least level 300. The barrier wall's durability can be consumed all at once to execute a powerful fire type attack with area of effect.]

“It’s done!”

Artpe let out a cheer in an ungentlemanly fashion. Everyone, who had been watching him, had a confused expression on their face. Until now, the Reinforcement had been accompanied by light, and loud changes. No changes were seen.

“Magician, nothing has changed...?”

“Did you perhaps cheat us!”

“M... my Magic Stones! Give me back my Magic Stones! It is worth 45 thousand gold!”

“Hoo.”

He smirked when he saw the unenlightened get mad. Afterwards, Maetel used her final Acceleration to grab the unconscious Sienna, who was plummeting towards the water. Then she went straight towards the top of the wall.

“Artpe!”

The Kraken had taken a serious hit from Sienna, so it had fallen into a Stun status. The school of mermen tried to catch them in its stead, but it was impossible to catch up with Maetel, who was using Berserk and Acceleration. In the end, she was successful in landing on the wall with Sienna in tow.

“Did you succeed, Artpe?”

“Of course. You did well, Maetel. Also, Sienna... Good. She is unharmed.”

She had fallen unconscious, because she had expelled all her magical energy at once. Aside from that fact, she was fine. Artpe brushed her head once. Sienna was breathing evenly. He extended his Mana String, and he wrapped them around the body of his party members.

“Everyone should be prepared.”

[Koo-rooooo-ahhhhhhhhhh!]

The Kraken was a beat too late in coming to its senses. It let out a roar as if the world was ending. The Kraken’s preys were snatched away. Its rage was on par with Maetel’s rage.

Artpe spoke.

“This round of vibration will be pretty strong.”

Afterwards, the Kraken charged towards the barrier wall, and there was a terrifying collision.

This was the flame created by the daughter of the Phoenix. It manifested itself in this world through a proxy.

Chapter 63

Kraken (4)

When the Kraken collided with the barrier wall, hellfire came into existence. It shot out as if was about to burn the whole world. The hellfire burned as it crawled all over the body of the Kraken. It was a flame from a bygone era where humans of this world weren't able to face it.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhk! Koo-ahhhhhhh!]

The flame ruthlessly pierced through the Kraken's thick skin as it started to burn flesh, blood and innards. The murderous hellfire was trying to roast it alive. The Kraken lost all of its reason as it went berserk.

[Kee-ahhhhhhhhhhh!]

As its struggles became fiercer, the barrier wall responded with more flames. It was unforgiving towards the attacker. The flames flooded forth, and it encircled the Kraken's entire body.

It was as if the flame had a will of its own. It was as if the flame was punishing the monster that had invaded the human territory.

“My god...”

“If that really was created through the magician’s power...”

“I have to concede the fact that 500 Magic Stones was worth investing in this barrier wall!”

There were enough monsters here to easily wipe out a single country, yet their charge was being blocked by a single wall. Of course, the barrier wall was Reinforced with fire, and it worked in concert with the vibration. The boiling ocean and churning the waters inflicted continuous damage to the monsters. The Kraken was also taking continuous damage. It couldn’t be compared to the damage inflicted on it by Maetel and Sienna.

[Kee-heeeee!]

[W... we have to run away!]

The other monsters were swept up in the Kraken's rampage, and they were dying before they could even put up a fight. The vibration and heat emitted by the barrier wall couldn't be overcome by monsters under level 200. All the monsters in the vicinity of the Kraken died by being swept up in the Kraken's rampage.

"Mmmm?"

Several dozen monsters were being killed each second. This was the consequence for being near the mighty fight between the Kraken and the barrier wall. Artpe was looking at these monsters when he suddenly realized something. The Record and EXP of the dead monsters were being sucked into him.

'Is it because I was acknowledged as the owner of the barrier wall...?'

He had talked about transferring the ownership of the barrier wall to Mycenae, but this was a human matter. The wall wouldn't care about trade since Artpe had Reinforced the wall.

'In my past life, I've never benefited from using this type of Artifacts so I had no idea... However, I can feel it right now. There is a firm connection between me and the Hellfire Sentinel.'

The Mana String connecting the wall to Etna was severed long ago. Currently, the supersized artifact was solely under the jurisdiction of Artpe.

Moreover, the number of monsters killed by the heat and vibration emitted by the barrier wall would soon reach 10 thousand. Many of these monsters were well below level 100, but at this number, Artpe's level would rise.

'Maybe I should just live up here until the Lunatic Wave ends.'

His level was increasing even as he did nothing. The experience was so sweet that he was having thoughts that were slightly off. However, Artpe quickly gave up on the idea he was having.

A single level rose from the death of 10,000 monsters. By the time he reached level

200, he would barely be able to raise a single level even if he could gather all the monsters of the ocean to crash against the barrier wall.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“T... the Kraken is continuing its attack.”

“Everyone get down from the barrier wall! It will overtake us soon!”

“That monster!”

The Kraken’s thrashing was becoming more severe. The Kraken suffered excruciating pain and burns on each attack, but it didn’t back down. Either its body would fail or the barrier would fall. The choice was binary. It wouldn’t stop until the end.

“Ah, Artpe-nim. Are you really sure the wall can stop it?”

“Absolutely.”

He had completed this wall with the help of Etna, so this wall wouldn’t fall. The Kraken was probably aware of this fact, yet it didn’t stop.

Why was this?

Was the Kraken normally this stupid?

That couldn’t be it. The Kraken had gained a good amount of intelligence over the years. The wall wasn’t something that could be easily overcome. It should have retreated after one or two attacks. The Kraken was supposed to be a sensible monster. It should have put its own survival over all else.

So why was it acting like this? Its body was so large that he couldn’t find the answer initially. However, his Read All Creation was bringing in bits and pieces of information in real time. In the end, he found his answer.

[Kraken]

[Level : 267]

[Irregular Status: It is spellbound by the curse of Madness.]

The curse of Madness had been placed on the Kraken.

[Koo-haaaaaaa!]

[We follow the Kraken!]

[W... we'll follow it. We'll destroy the wall!]

There were a good number of monsters inflicted by this curse. They knew their deaths were assured, yet they rabidly crashed into the wall. The monsters met their promised deaths. The sight reminded him of what happened within the auction house not too long ago. He had fought against Demons that weren't of sound mind. He now knew who had placed the curse on the Kraken and the monsters. The answer was quite obvious.

When the Demons activated the cursed magic circle within the city, the magic must have traveled towards the monsters of the ocean to trigger a similar magic.

They weren't just trying to induce a Lunatic Wave. The Demon King's army had decided to bury Diaz. The plan was meticulous, and it had been well executed.

If Artpe hadn't been here, it would have been a horrible massacre. The thought made him shudder.

"The Demon King's army is moving for real now..."

The artifacts related to the curse, the magic spell that was activated within Frate and the Lunatic Wave meshed together in an intricate manner to create this situation. No matter how he thought about it, something was definitely off about the chef! The Demon King's army didn't move in this style!

It seemed the information he gained from Etna was lacking. He let out a sigh as he had this thought.

Everyone was still looking at him.

"What? You should all go do your assigned tasks. Why are you all standing around like this?"

He was taken aback at their unexpectedly undivided attention. He tilted his head in puzzlement. When they saw this, Mycenae acted as the representative for the group. She asked him a question. The light in her eyes was truly earnest.

"Artpe-nim, how long do we have to hold out like this?"

"I'm not sure. I guess we'll do this until their madness end, and they get tired."

"Can't you kill it...? As it stands, the people will continue to live in fear"

"Ajumma, can you truly ask me in good conscience as to whether I can kill it when you look at the size of that bastard?"

An extra large monster of Kraken's caliber had significant amount of recuperative powers. It was no joke.

He had pooled together everyone's power to create this barrier wall, but it only had the power to deter the Kraken. Over half of the damage received from the wall was recovered through its natural recuperative powers. It would probably take one or two month for it to die. Even that timeline was overly optimistic.

"That is why we have to give up on the idea of killin..."

"Magician, we have to kill that Kraken."

Someone interrupted Artpe's words. He looked towards the noble. This particular noble was someone that held a lot sway amongst the foreign nobles. If Artpe had to guess, he probably was a count or a duke.

"At this rate, we will have no excuse we can give to our respective countries. Just my country alone lost around 100 Magic Stones. At such a cost, we can only expect to hold out and hope for the Kraken to turn back? Of course, I am well aware that our survival itself is a miracle, but you have to think about what our respective countries will think."

"So what you are saying right now is... You need some result that would justify the use of the Magic Stones?"

"As expected of a magician, you are wise. You hit the nail on the head."

The noble let out a bitter laugh. Since they had already surrendered the Magic Stones, they needed a result that matched what they spent. It was a valid line of reasoning, so Artpe heard the noble's case.

However, that's as far as he went.

"As I've said, you are asking for impossible. The only thing I promised was the safety of the city and your lives."

"It really will be tough for all of us. I'm sure this will affect Diaz's relationship with the other countries. Can't you do anything about this?"

The noble spoke those words thinking Artpe was a citizen of Diaz. It was basically a threat. The noble was implying that Diaz would be put in a disadvantageous position if Artpe didn't step up.

Artpe snorted when he heard the nobleman's words. He was a Demon that was reborn as a human. The emotional attachment he had towards the country he was affiliated with was almost nonexistent...

"Look here, ajusshi. It is truly regrettable that it has to be this way, but I have no method available to me that would allow me to kill the Kraken. This will end in sorrow if you threaten someone who doesn't have the ability to do anything."

"Didn't you already create several miracles already!"

"That was all done through my ability. Those weren't miracles. They are called miracles, since it never happens!"

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

As if it was responding to Artpe's annoyed voice, the Kraken rammed into the barrier wall once again. At that moment, something that made him question his eyes occurred.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhh! Goo-oh-ahhhhhhhhh!]

The rampaging Kraken had thrown its entire body towards the barrier wall, and a very small crack formed on the wall.

“Uh...”

The cracks were so small that only the owner of the Read All Creation ability was sure of what had happened. The wall had cracked. Moreover, once a crack forms, there was a high probability that the crack would widen.

Cold sweat started flowing down Artpe’s back.

“What’s wrong, Artpe-nim?”

“A miracle that is slightly disadvantageous towards us has occurred...”

In the case of Ice type and Water type monsters, there was no way in hell it could have caused any meaningful damage to the wall unless the monster was over level 300.

This wasn’t supposed to happen.

So how could a level 267 Kraken accomplish this? How? Until now, its strikes hadn’t done anything to the barrier wall!

‘Wait a moment. Now that I think about it...?’

In an instant, something flashed within his mind.

A normal Kraken was always categorized as pure Ice type monster or a Water type monster. There was no exceptions to this rule.

However, the Kraken had flinched when it took an impact wound from Sienna. It was the reason why Artpe hadn’t been late in completing his Reinforcement.

Why did it do that?

A mere curse of Madness shouldn’t have caused such repulsion from Sienna’s magical energy!

As he held this question in his mind, Artpe turned to look at the Kraken. He once again activated his Read All Creation, and he finally figured it out.

[Kraken]

[Level : 267]

[The experiment for Demonification had failed. Several curses related to the mind had been stacked. The Demonic gene is out of control.]

'My god... This is connected to the Demonification experiments conducted in Diaz!?"

The Kraken was a pure Ice or Water type monster. However, the failed experiment had imbued twisted properties of a Demon unto the Kraken, and it was boosting the Kraken's power. When he realized this fact, Artpe unconsciously mumbled to himself.

"I have to kill it..."

"I knew it! It is possible!"

"There is a fundamental difference between a task one can do, and a task one must accomplish even at the risk of one's life. Anyways, you guys should get out of here."

"What?"

The nobles were enraged by Artpe's harsh words. Artpe snorted as he spoke.

"The wall will fall soon. If that is fine with you, you can ride on your high horse by staying here."

"Why would this wall fall..."

[Koo-ooooooooohng!]

At that moment, the Kraken rammed into the wall again. The Hellfire Sentinel sent out stronger flame and vibration. As a price, it couldn't avoid the fairly large crack from forming. This time other people realized what had happened.

"T... the wall is..."

"Run away! Everyone get down from the wall!"

Artpe didn't go out of his way to help them. He didn't owe them anything. Aside from Artpe, Mycenaе, Maetel and Sienna, everyone quickly clung to the wall. It took them less than a minute to evacuate from the wall. They practically jumped off the wall, and they ran towards downtown.

Artpe was in awe when he saw this.

As expected, humans were able to perform superhuman feats when their lives were on the line. It would have been great if they could have used some of that superhuman ability in fighting the Kraken. The fact that they couldn't do so was a shortcoming that couldn't be fixed.

[Ka-hahhhhhhhh! Kee-ahhhhhhhh!]

When it realized there was a crack forming in the wall, the Kraken's rampage became increased in intensity as time passed. The corpses of dead monsters filled the ocean. There was so many bodies that they were starting to stack up. As Artpe's level grew, his restlessness grew alongside it.

"I trusted in you, Artpe-nim!"

The one to take this development the hardest was Mycenaе. If the Kraken couldn't be defeated, it would be the end for her!

"You learned a great lesson, ajumma. You shouldn't trust people so easily from now on."

"Eeeeeeeeeeee!"

He spoke in a playful manner, but Artpe's head was still churning to come up with a way to defeat the Kraken.

Fortunately, he had an outline of a plan that would allow him to kill the Kraken. It was the Hellfire Sentinel. The wall's durability could be consumed at once to inflict a powerful area of effect fire attack. The wall's final attack still remained.

"The problem remains that I have no idea if that single attack will kill the Kraken."

If it died from the final attack, it would create a happy ending. If not, they would be in a far worse situation. If the Kraken was still alive, it didn't matter how critical of a

wound he could inflict on the Kraken. The Kraken would easily destroy the 2nd and 3rd tier barrier wall constructed by the humans.

'I have to find some way to weaken it... But how? Shit. I haven't learned any proper magic yet!'

Magicians were beings that possessed unfathomably strong powers. Unfortunately, most of the great magics that could turn the tide of the battle could be learned after level 200. Artpe's level was still lacking, and such precious magic spells rarely came on the market.

This was why Artpe wanted to cross the ocean to Aedia as soon as possible! He wanted to be in the land of magicians!

"I have no choice. Somehow, I'll..."

[Nya.]

"Nya?"

Artpe was grinding his teeth as he was about to quickly yank free his Mana Strings.

At that moment, he heard a strange voice ring in his ears. Artpe repeated the voice he heard. It just slipped out of his mouth. Maetel looked at Artpe with sparkling eyes. Her eyes said she was about to perish from the cuteness of his action.

"Artpe, we are in such a desperate situation, yet you are playing such a prank! Jeez! You are too cute!"

"No, I didn't..."

[Nya!]

Artpe immediately closed his mouth. Just in case, he quickly turned around to see if it was Etna. However, she was hiding within the shadow of the streets. She had her eyes firmly closed as she clasped both her two hands together. She was earnestly wishing for his victory. She looked suited for the role of a holy maiden rather than a Demon.

"Then who... Ah?"

Fortunately, he found the answer shortly.

No, it was more accurate to say the answer came to him.

[Nyaa! Nyaan!]

“You...”

Something flew at lightning speed through the air, and it latched onto Artpe’s arm. Then it rubbed its head against his robe.

It had black fur, and its purple eyes shone much brighter from within the darkness. It was shaking its tail in a threatening manner, and it fearlessly stretched its four legs... Artpe activated his Read All Creation ability, and he was able to confirm its identity.

“You... You were a cat?”

[Nyahhhhhh!]

It stood 20 centimeters tall, and if one included its tail, it was 40 centimeters long. The cat let out a fierce cry.

After stuffing itself, the Greed Beast had finally came to see its owner.

Chapter 64

Kraken (5)

[Nyaaaaaaa.]

There was an intruder on top of the barrier wall. Despite the fact that they were in a desperate situation, the atmosphere amongst the hero's party was shaken for a brief moment.

"What is that black cat, Artpe?"

"I don't care about the cat. We have to do something about the Kraken right now, Artpe-nim!"

"Everyone be quiet for a moment."

[Nyaa, nyaa-ah-ah-, nyaa-ooh-ee-ooh-ah!]

When the Greed Beast was born, there had been a feast prepared right in front of its newly opened eyes. It seemed a deep impression had been created on the Greed Beast. It started talking about which one was tasty, and it went into the topic of how some curses were sweeter than others. It started describing its impression of what it ate. This was useless information to Artpe, but it seemed there was a different taste to each curse and evil energy.

[Nyahh, nyaa-oooh, nyaa-nyaa-ah!]

"Yes, yes. I'm glad you were able to eat such delicious foods."

As Mycenae had pointed out, he couldn't leisurely play with the cat right now. However, he couldn't hide the smile that had formed on his lips when he saw it. The Greed Beast had sought him out.

It felt as if he had just unearthed the final key that would solve this situation.

"So are you a bit full now?"

[Nyaaaa.]

“You ate that much, yet you are still hungry. Yes, all right.”

“Huh? Artpe can understand what it is saying?”

“Yes, I’m its owner.”

Everyone else heard cute cries coming from the cat, but Artpe clearly understood the intent behind the noises it created. There was a powerful connection between Artpe and the Greed Beast. It was something that couldn’t be replicated even with a Soul Contract.

This was also something that was unique to the Magician Class. It was the power of ‘Familiar Control’.

Normally, magical energy was imbued into a living creature to form a contract. When animals become familiars, they were given superior abilities and intelligence compared to the normal animals.

Most magicians chose birds for its ability to fly, but there were eccentric magicians out there that chose cats, mice or even bugs as familiars.

However, there was a rule.

‘Monsters couldn’t be made into familiars. The only thing close to such a skill is the Demon race’s Control skill...’

However, this wasn’t a normal monster. It was a beast that was in charge of one of the 7 Deadly Sins, and he had unwittingly created a Familiar contract with it.

Was this possible because he was a hero!

This shouldn’t be possible even if he was a hero!

However, that wasn’t important right now.

The important fact was that the cat was still hungry.

“Look at that.”

[Nya?] [

The cat climbed up his arm, and he willing allowed the cat to perch on his shoulder. He raised a finger to point at the Kraken. Its gluttony had originated from consuming curses, so of course, the Greed Beast could recognize what he was pointing out.

“Can you feel it?”

[Nya!? Nyahhhh!] [

There was an appetizing curse energy infused within the Kraken’s enormous body. The Greed Beast had purples eyes that resembled Artpe’s eyes. Its eyes shone from excitement. The cat was showing signs of wanting to attack the Kraken at that very moment. He calmed the cat by speaking in a level manner.

“I want you to eat all of that. However, that bastard is a scary monster, so you have to be careful. If not, you might get hurt.”

[Nyaaaaaa!] [

The Greed Beast snorted at Artpe’s words, which was tinged with worry.

If it was hit by the big brute, it would no longer call itself the Greed Beast. It would call itself the Groan Beast. When the cat gave such a reply, Artpe nodded his head in a solemn manner.

“All right. Come back after you are done. When you succeed, I’ll give you a pretty name.”

He had given the cat its first instruction.

[Nyaaaaaa!] [

After it received its orders, the confluence of evil Greed energy hidden within the small cat manifested itself in the form of a black fog. It charged towards the ocean. The eyes of Maetel and Mycenaе turned round when they saw this.

“I knew it had too much magical energy, but it wasn’t a cat in the first place!”

“It isn’t a living organism!? Aht! Now that I think about it, I saw the trace of its Mana

within the auction house..."

"Shhh. Curiosity killed the Dark Elf merchant."

"You are too selective in giving details!"

Mycenae wanted to ask him about what happened to all the items that had been inside the auction house. However, she knew they would all be in trouble if she voiced such thoughts out loud. This was why she firmly bottled up the urge.

"I'm not sure what's going on, but can we win now, Artpe?"

Maetel asked the question instead of Mycenae. Her eyes were brilliant as if they were emeralds, and her eyes were filled with her trust towards Artpe. Artpe grinned as he answered her.

"If we can't win with this gambit, we have to break this off cleanly. We'll run away. Everyone should gather your stuff, so we can run away at any moment."

He spoke in a dependable manner, but his words had turned towards a cowardly direction!

"Artpe-niiiiim!"

"That is why I told you all to get down from here."

Artpe placed a hand on top of the barrier wall. It was a familiar sight. He had done the same thing several times as he Reinforced the wall. However, the Mana emanating from him was different. It was very sharp and destructive.

The Mana was refined for purely destructive purposes. It looked as if he was making a set of Mana Strings before he returned it to pure Mana.

"Hurry. You should take Sienna along with you."

If Sienna had been conscious, she might have been helpful against the Kraken, who was polluted by the Demonic gene. However, she had been put into unconsciousness through unnatural means. This was why Artpe had to do this somehow with the help of the Greed Beast!

"Go right now."

He once again ordered the party members to head down, and his voice had taken a turn for the worse. However, Maetel pouted as she shook her head from side to side.

"I'm staying here with Artpe. Ajumma can take care of Sienna."

"All right. You can stay here, and ajumma can take care of the rest."

"Eeeeek. I'm pretty sure I had a pretty active part in all of this not too long ago. Now you want me to meekly retreat with a party member in tow as if I'm some kind of an extra. I can't stand it!"

Mycenae grumbled, but unlike her words, she obediently took Sienna down from the wall. Even if she was rotten, she was a Dark Elf. She didn't need to rely on a ladder. Even with a person in tow, she bounced down the wall. The sight of her back looked really cool, but Artpe didn't even glance at her. She was treated like an extra until the end.

[Koo-oohhhng!]

[Nyaaaaaa!]

On the other side of the wall, the Kraken showed no signs of tiring as it continued its rampage. It was feeling pain from the flame and vibration, but it was using pain to fuel its anger. The curse of madness and the Demonic gene was a great combination. As time passed, the blackened flesh exfoliated from the Kraken's large body, and its skin was getting tougher.

'...if I let things go on any further, a new race like the Evil Reflector might be born here.'

However, the Kraken was unable to create such an anomalous event, because the Greed Beast was present. The Greed Beast was able to consume curses within Demons and humans. Of course, it would be able to extract the curse from a big dumb squid!

As a the owner of the Read All Creation, he wanted to see a new Record being made. However, he wouldn't jeopardize his life to see it.

Artpe spread his Mana into the entirety of the barrier wall as he sincerely wished for the Greed Beast to finish its mission safely. He couldn't drag this out any longer. He

had to end this by striking a decisive blow.

"Artpe, there are more cracks forming on the wall."

"It's all right. It'll becomes easier for me to attack as it breaks the barrier wall. My attack procedure is already in place. It'll immediately engage as soon as the wall falls. The remaining problem is the timing of the attack."

Best timing...

He had to wait until all the curse and evil energy to be taken by the Greed Beast. The Kraken had to be in a structurally unstable state. Artpe was using his Read All Creation ability to hone in on the right moment. An endless light emanated from him as he continuously monitored the status of the Hellfire Sentinel and the Kraken's body.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhh!]

[Nyaa, nyaaahhhhhh!]

The Krakken was obsessed with trying to break the Hellfire Sentinel, so it didn't notice the Greed Beast invading its body. It was as the Greed Beast had guaranteed. The cat leisurely burrowed into various parts of the Kraken's body, and it stuffed itself of cursed Mana. It didn't take too long for a change that was visible to the eyes to occur.

[Koo-ha-ahhhh, kee-ooh-ahhhhhh!]

The Kraken charged once again, and an enormous collision occurred. At that moment, a part of its thickened skin, which had formed over time, to fall off!

Black blood erupted from where the crust used to be, and it lessened the power of the curse within the Kraken. It let out a cry of pain, and the Greed Beast shouted with joy.

[Koo-oh-ahhhhhh!]

[Nyahhhhhh! Nyah-ooh-oh-ahhh!]

"Is that cat trying to copy the scream of the Kraken?"

[Koo-ohhhhhhhh!]

The Kraken was feeling pain, yet it looked as if it was trying to forget the current pain by producing a bigger pain. It madly rammed itself into the barrier wall. The vibration was caused naturally by the wall, but the tremors caused by the Kraken's attack amplified the vibration. It was bad enough that a normal person would immediately fall.

"A little bit more... Just a little bit more...!"

[Koo-oh-ahhhhh!]

As the wall kept losing its durability, Artpe carefully inspected the wall. He mumbled to himself in a dejected manner. The Greed Beast started to consume the curse at a much rapid pace as instructed. The blood mixed with the curse flowed from various parts of the Kraken's body, but the Kraken was showing no signs of slowing down.

"I made a mistake. The Kraken is devoid of its soul. It might be the curse or the effects of the Demonification experiments, but there isn't a single ounce of conscious thought left in its mind."

"Artpe, the wall..."

"I know! Shit!"

The Kraken's power was much stronger than expected, so the wall was falling much faster than expected. Artpe was spreading his Mana to try to slow down the collapse. He was trying hard, but there was a limit to what his Mana could do.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhh!]

[Nyaaaaaaa!]

The Kraken intertwined several dozen tentacles, and it struck a powerful blow against the wall. The sound of the wall cracking could be heard, and one could see an unrecoverable wound form on the heart of the barrier wall. It was as if a lightning had struck the wall. The wall cracked in half from top to bottom. It formed right bewtween Artpe and Maetel.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhh!]

"Artpe!"

“Maetel, you should get down before it is too late!”

“But!”

“Right now!”

Artpe sensed that the moment had come. It didn’t matter if it hadn’t been weakened all the way. Even if a single attack couldn’t kill it, he had to use the attack right now. If not, the barrier wall would collapse, and that would be the end to everything.

“I ask his favor of you, Etna...!”

He was hoping Etna’s prayer would reach the gods! If it did reach them, that would be a problem too! Artpe struck the wall with his mana-infused fist. He let out a shout that carried his anger!

“Dieeeeeeee!”

It happened when his magical energy spread to the entirety of the wall! The wall broke into countless fragments as it showered down towards the ground. Each of them were surrounded by hellfire, and they looked like comets falling from the sky.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhh!]

[Nyaa!? Nyaaaaaaaahhhh!]

The Kraken’s body had a lot of surface area, so he was being pelted by the meteors! It let out a wretched scream. The Greed Beast was burrowed inside the Kraken’s body, so it didn’t receive any damage. However, it made a fuss by asking why Artpe was attacking the Kraken when it wasn’t finished eating. However, that was of no concern to Artpe.

“You should eat as much as you can then you should retreat!”

[Nyaa! Nyaa-ah! Nyaa-ah-ah!]

Artpe bit his lips as he slowly fell through the air. He was checking how critical of a damage each of the massive amounts of rocks were causing. He came to the conclusion that it wasn’t enough.

The Kraken was refined by the life energy of the ocean, and the demonic energy. It had become extremely hard, strong and durable. The attack would destroy 70% of the Kraken's body, but the remaining 30% could easily lay waste to Frate.

It wasn't enough. Even if it was half dead, he couldn't win against it. He couldn't kill it.

They had to run away.

When he came to that conclusion, a laugh came out unbidden. He finally grasped his station in the world. It was so pathetic that he couldn't stand it.

'The skill of running away with exquisite timing is one of the skills needed for the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings. Heroes are the only one that could fight a fair fight until the end to come out on top. I'm a fake, so this was impossible from the start. I should just run away, and they could curse me for doing so. This is obvious to me now.'

He fell slowly towards the ocean as countless fragments either grazed or hit the Kraken. In that short amount of time, he took some time for introspection.

The sense of defeat filled his body, and it couldn't be erased. Who the hell did he think he was? Why did he step forward in a battle that couldn't be won? Did he unconsciously become drunk on the respect given to him by other people?

It was truly funny. No, it wasn't funny at all.

'I don't have any right to deride the humans. It seems I was born as a human, and I've been influenced by the way of humans. All right. I realize this now. We have to run away. I'll run away with Maetel and Sienna. This time I'll do it the rightway from the beginning. I will never stepforward again. I'll do everything from the back. It is sufficient for Maetel to be the only one in the front line. Yes, this is it.'

"Artpe!"

"...huh?"

Someone interrupted Artpe's thoughts, which was expanding in an uncontrollable manner. Artpe was relying on the gravitation pull to descend. When he dumbly turned to look, he identified the owner of the voice. He caught sight of Maetel. She was relying on the Blink Boots he had put on her feet to run towards him.

“Idiot, we have to run away now...”

“I got you... Record Divide!”

Maetel didn’t listen to Artpe’s words as she used Blink. When she grabbed his robe, she activated her Unique skill.

She was trying to share her magical energy through her skill, but what would that accomplish? He was about to snort when he felt the magical energy flow into him. His insides became numb.

“You... How...?”

It wasn’t Maetel’s magical energy.

This was obvious, but it wasn’t Artpe’s magical energy either.

“Artpe, can you do it now?”

He was taken aback by Maetel’s question, but he firmly nodded his head as an answer.

“I’ll try.”

“Yes. That’s my Artpe!”

Maetel let out a bright smile, and Artpe couldn’t help but snicker. His whole body had been dominated by the feeling of helplessness. Now it felt as if energy and hope was surging up within him.

The magical energy flowing into him was the type of magical energy that absolutely negated the demonic energy... It was the magical energy of Sienna, who was still unconscious.

Chapter 65

Kraken (6)

Maetel had used Record Divide to deliver magical energy to Artpe. It wasn't her own magical energy. She had brought Sienna's magical energy. In the process of experiencing the Record Link and Artpe's Mana Link, she had perfected her unique skill!

Originally, it was a skill that allowed her to share spells and abilities with Artpe. However, she had brought along Sienna's ability too. Something incomprehensible had happened.

However, Artpe didn't ask how this was possible. He used that time to think about how to kill the Kraken using this new factor.

The conclusion was simple. He just had to Reinforce the fragments that were still falling towards the Kraken.

If the Hellfire Sentinel was intact, it would have been impossible. However, it had broken apart completely, and each fragments were basically akin to a high rank consumable artifact. This was why it was possible for him to pull this off. He would have to consume a massive amount of Mana, but Artpe would be able to pull it off by squeezing out every ounce of Mana from within his body.

"Reinforcement."

Artpe activated his skill, and at the same time, he took out the Demite's Gemstone. It couldn't be used as it was originally intended, since it wasn't completely refined. Despite this fact, it could be used in the manner he had used against the Slime. It could receive and amplify Artpe's magical energy.

"When I made the resolve to retreat, I never expected to be pushed back into another risky venture like this..."

"This isn't risky. Artpe can do this."

After transporting Sienna's magical energy, Maetel clung to Artpe. She gave up her remaining magical energy to him. The two were clinging to each other, so they were falling faster towards the surface of the water. It was a desperate situation, yet she looked at Artpe with absolute conviction.

"We can do this."

"...yes, you really can't help but be a hero."

The hero insisted on 'we'. It was as if she was scoffing at Artpe, who had thought about doing all of this alone. She truly looked like the hero he had seen in his past life. It made him laugh. The laughter was a mixture of admiration towards her, and the derision he felt towards himself. It was a fifty-fifty mix.

Until now, he had recklessly tried to do everything by himself. When he found himself unable to succeed, he had labeled himself as a 'fake hero'. He did as he pleased, and his thoughts were like a self-fulfilling prophecy. He had been ready to run away. Artpe had been under a misconception. Even in his past life, the hero had never tried to accomplish tasks by herself!

She had always had companions by her side. In his past life, Artpe couldn't understand the reasoning behind it.

One plus one was always equaled two. Usually, conflict occurred when you put people together. There was a far greater chance of encountering a Dragon than to find people one was able to work synergistically with.

As a Demon, Artpe took no heed of others. He considered them to be hindrances, and he considered it fortunate if he wasn't hurt by them. It wasn't as if he liked being by himself. However, the situation, the era and the state of his mind at the time made him fly solo.

This was why he couldn't completely discard his old habit even after his reincarnation. He was with Maetel and Sienna now. However, he had assessed their abilities, and he had put them in separate categories. He had acted as if he was being rational, and he had done everything his own way. This was why he had only thought about sending away Maetel and Sienna from the front line. He had considered their roles to be done.

However, that wasn't true. Heroes had the ability to make the impossible possible. They made things that shouldn't exist together to be able to coexist with each other.

The proof was right in front of him right now. Sienna's magical energy was being absorbed and amplified within the Demite's Gemstone.

Sienna's magical energy was being transferred through Maetel, and it was manifesting from Artpe's hands.

"We aren't a chimera. What the hell is this? It makes no sense."

"Heh heh. I didn't think it would work. However, when I tried really hard, it worked."

"How can you come here with such a mentality? You really are the worst."

She really was the worst. She was so ridiculous that he couldn't get annoyed with her. He could only laugh. He was happy. He would have to question her later on, but it was fine for now.

"Go."

Artpe spoke in a whisper as he unleashed the magical energy. It was transferred to all the fragments of Hellfire Sentinel that existed in this world. He activated his Reinforcement skill to Reinforce all of them again. He coated Sienna's magic around the fragments, and the flames were Reinforced. Their speed was increased, and a target was set.

His merciless eyes flashed as if he was the Demon King that would bring about the destruction to this world. In the next moment, his mouth opened once again, and he spat out fire with his words.

"Blow up the head of that damned squid!"

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhh!]

Kraken swallowed within its pain as it roared, and it sent out its blackened tentacles.

Before they could reach Artpe and Maetel, white flaming comets hit the Kraken's body.

The attack was the complete opposite to the Kraken's attribute. Unlike the previous attacks, this attack melted the body at a fundamental level!

[Kyahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhk!]

[Nya!? Nyaahhhhhhhh! Nyaa nyaa! Nyaa nyaa nyaa-ah-ah!]

The Kraken let out a desperate cry. The Greed Beast was taken aback. If it continued to be greedy, it might die alongside the Kraken. It quickly retreated. A twisted smile appeared on Artpe's lips when he heard the Kraken's roar and scream. It was a horrible shriek filled with a curse towards him.

'It is done. We won.'

When he was sure his Reinforcement was successful, he was dominated by the feeling of delight and accomplishment. They hadn't retreated. They had won. He didn't want to help those damn humans, but he was thrilled that he was able to finish all of this without holding himself in contempt.

It felt as if the parts that he felt deficient about himself was made whole. The one to fill that deficiency was the hero, who was falling with him.

[Koo-ohhhhhh, koo-ahhhhhng!]

All the Mana within Artpe was emptying out, and he was steadily losing consciousness. He wondered if he was going to die after achieving victory. If he was hit by an errant tentacle, it would be the end of him. There was no way he could be that unlucky. At the very least, he wished Maetel to be safe...

Countless thoughts crossed his mind. Even as they were plummeting towards the ocean, he caught sight of the hero. She refused to let go of his hand. He wasn't thinking anything. He instinctively called out the name of the hero.

"Maetel..."

"Huh?"

Maetel had also exhausted all her Mana, so she was in the same boat as Artpe. She was close to losing consciousness. There wasn't a single ounce of energy within her voice as she responded to the tired voice of Artpe. He extended his hand to hold her lightly, and he spoke as if he was in a dream.

"Hurry..."

"Yes..."

He was moments away from losing consciousness. It was the moments after the victory. He wasn't of sound mind at that moment. Artpe spoke words that he would regret for the rest of his life.

“Grow faster... You...”

“Huh... Huh!?”

Maetel was also losing consciousness like Artpe, but at his words, she instantly regained consciousness as she replied to his words.

He wanted her to grow faster? Why? Of course, there was only one reason why he would want this!?

“Ah. Aaaaaaaaaaaaaartpe? Wait a moment. Can you say that again! Say it one more time!”

“Hooo...”

However, Artpe couldn't finish his words as he lost complete consciousness. His body became slack. There was a good chance he wouldn't be able to remember his words even after he woke up.

“Eeeeek... All right, Artpe! I'll grow up as soon as possible!”

However, Maetel had clearly received his words, so Maetel didn't care what happened!

“Faster... If I grow up faster...! Artpe will...!”

Her eyes were burning with resolve and determination. It wasn't up to her as to how fast she could grow, but such a small problem wouldn't get in her way. It would be of no problem to her!

She'll grow up fast. Artpe said he wanted her to grow up fast, so she would grow up fast! She would grow up fast, and...

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhht!”

She used her transcendent will and the power of love to regain full consciousness. She clutched Artpe's unconscious body to her. In the next moment, the two plunged into

the ocean together.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhng!]

“Oooh-ohhhhhhhhhhh!”

Artpe's worries hadn't been unfounded. The Kraken did execute a final attack, but it couldn't scratch the burning will of Maetel. After squeezing out its last strength, the Kraken died in vain.

Maetel had used the power of her will to transcend everything. As she watched the end of the Kraken, she felt a massive and overwhelming amount of EXP flow into her and the members of her party. She was finally able to let go of her consciousness. It was the moment where the hero's party had achieved complete victory against the Kraken.

[Nyaa... Nyaa-ha-ha-ha-ha!]

The only one conscious until the end was the Greed Beast. It let out a roar of delight as if it owned the world.

As if it wanted to prove its own existence, it let out an evil cry that was filled with greed.

When Artpe opened his eyes, he saw two girls clinging onto him as they slept.

“This again?”

It was something that always happened, so he wasn't surprised. He let out a sigh as he raised his hand towards his head. However, he realized something was there. He felt soft fur that flowed downwards. He felt a warm sensation, and he felt a head rubbing against his palm in a cute manner.

[Nyaa.]

“It was you?”

Artpe gripped the Greed Beast by the back of the neck, and he brought it up in front of his eyes. It looked like a cat, but its fur was black as ebony, and it possessed purple eyes. No matter how one looked at it, it looked similar to Artpe.

“Did you get influence by me during your birth?”

[Nyaaa.]

“Yes, I see. You protected us while we slept? Thank you.”

[Nyaa, nyaa-ah-ah. Nyaaah!]

“That’s right. I did say I’ll give you a name...”

Artpe thought about it for a brief moment before he opened his mouth.

“All right. How about Amethyst?”

[Nyaaaaaaaaaaaaah!]

It answered by saying it would rather be called the Greed Beast if it had to answer by that name. It seemed the cat wouldn’t allow him to half-ass this. Artpe clicked his tongue as he spoke the next candidate.

“How about Roa?”

[Nyaa... Nyaa, nyaa-ah!]

The cat said it wouldn’t give the name a 100 points. It was mediocre, but it decided to accept the name. It nodded its head as it licked Artpe’s cheek. It seemed the Greed Beast was fully mimicking a cat. Its rough tongue licked him, and it wasn’t a bad feeling.

“How long have I been out?”

[Nyaa-ahhh.]

“Two days?”

[Nyaa.]

After expending a massive amount of Mana, he had fallen unconscious. Even if he had experience multiple level ups, he had been prepared to be unconscious for a week. However, the answer that came back from Roa was encouraging. A slight smile formed

on his lips.

"Maetel and Sienna... Good. It seems they will wake up soon too."

Maetel and Sienna probably pushed themselves more than he did. Still, the level 267 Kraken held massive amounts of EXP. It was divided into three... no, it was divided into four if Roa was included. Their levels had increased in a crazy manner. This was why the aftereffects of the fight had been reduced by an overwhelming amount.

Artpe felt truly relieved when he realized the girls weren't hurt. He was surprised at this emotion, but he accepted it. He brushed the head of the girls, who were acting spoiled.

"Ooh-mmm... Artpe. Artpe."

"Still, level 215 is a bit much, Maetel."

He spoke such words, but Artpe's level was 216. It seemed his role in this venture had been much larger than Maetel, so the share of the EXP was skewed more towards him. He wondered if there had been a time when his level had been higher than Maetel's level. He realized this was the first time it had happened. Once Maetel finds out about this, she probably would be incredibly happy.

'Sienna is also at level 199. When she regains consciousness, I'm sure she will progress into her level 200 high rank Class.'

In killing the Kraken, she surely would have gained her Achievement. If she wasn't able to acquire her high rank Class, no one in this world was qualified to get it. He was sure of it.

[Nyaa! Nyaa nyaaa!]

"Yes, yes. You were born not too long ago, yet you are level 150. How much curse did you eat?"

[Nyaa!]

"It isn't just the curses?... Uh?"

It spoke the truth. The Greed Beast or Roa hadn't just eaten the curse energy like the

curse of madness. It had eaten all the evil thoughts of other beings, and it even ate the Demonic gene of the Kraken. It had eaten everything in a greedy manner!

“Nothing is wrong with your body, right...? If you suddenly become a thrall of the Demon King, I won’t hesitate to kill you.”

[Nyaa! Nyaa nyaa nyaa! Nyaa nyaa!]

Roa spoke out in anger at Artpe’s cold words. It said there was no way it would be controlled by such trivial energies. Still, there was a limit to how valiant one could be.

“It seems that wasn’t the only thing you ate. Can you spit them back out?”

[Nyaa-ah-ah...?]

“You can digest anything I don’t need. You just have to give me the important stuff.”

[Nyaa... Nyaa. Nyaa-ah.]

“Yes, you are a good girl.”

She was a smart beast that knew the reality of her current situation. She had no choice, but to obey Artpe’s words. Artpe scratched the back of her neck at her praiseworthy act. It seems it was quite pleasurable. She purred. She was completely a cat.

“You are awake, Artpe-nim!”

He was enjoying a rare moment of peace when the door suddenly opened. Mycenaе charged into the room. Her ears were trembling with anger.

“If you are awake then please hear me out, Artpe-nim! Those assholes outside are talking about how they should divvy up the Kraken’s corpse!”

“What? They want to divvy up the Kraken’s corpse?”

Artpe answered with a dumbfounded voice. Mycenaе vigorously nodded her head in anger.

“That’s right! They claim they had contributed in killing the Kraken by donating their Magic Stones. They are claiming they have partial rights to the corpse... They only

cooperated, because they had no choice if they wanted to live. They are being shameless!"

"First, calm down, Mycenaе."

"Ah-ooh-ooh."

When Mycenaе heard Artpe speak her name, she reflexively calmed down. He waited until the fluttering of her ears lessened. Then he nodded his head as he spoke.

"So they looted the Kraken? Did anything of significance come out?"

"No, if someone dared to touch it, a fight would have broke out. Therefore, no one has touched it yet... No, that isn't the important part! They are talking about divvying up the corpse when the person responsible for killing the Kraken isn't present! It is unacceptable...!"

"I see. They haven't tried to loot it yet. That is why everyone is still excited."

"What...?"

Normally, Artpe would have been hopping mad, but his expression was as calm as it could be.

Mycenaе had no idea what was going on, so her ears drooped. She had a dumbfounded expression on her face. Artpe petted the Greed Beast Roa, who was clinging to him. He nodded his head.

"Sure, they can divide it amongst themselves. It's all right. It isn't much."

"Artpe-nim... Did you perhaps do something before you lost consciousness?"

"Me? Nope. I was unconscious, so how could I have done anything?"

Artpe smirked. Roa, who was nestled against Artpe, also smirked.

"I didn't do anything. I didn't."

[Nyaaaaaaaaa.]

There was no need to interpret what Roa's meow meant.

Chapter 66

The Quest Isn't Done Yet (1)

As Artpe had predicted, Maetel and Sienna regained consciousness in short order. They were surprised at how much they had gotten stronger after they had woken up. This was especially true for Sienna. She was dazed.

“Oppa was able to kill the Kraken unscathed. What a relief... Still, I think I received too much EXP. Also, my skill is strangely more powerful now.”

“That’s because you contributed the most in killing the Kraken... Huh? It seems you aren’t aware of this fact. Maetel, did you really get Sienna’s consent before you brought her magical energy?”

Artpe’s question was sharper than Maetel’s long sword. Maetel turned up her smile to 120% as she answered him.

“My feelings and thoughts for Artpe is the same as Sienna! Of course, my feelings are much stronger compared to hers.”

Basically, she hadn’t received consent from Sienna. She was able to take and use someone else’s magical energy as she pleased. Artpe was having a hard time figuring out the skill called Record Divide. Before he did anything, he flicked Maetel’s forehead several times.

“I told you countless times that there is a close relationship between Mana and one’s life. If she hadn’t leveled up, Sienna would have been put in a precarious situation.”

“If I didn’t do it, Artpe would have died!”

“Oppa!? You almost died!?”

At Maetel’s words, Sienna freaked out as she reacted to the news. Maetel knew this was her chance. She told Sienna all about what Artpe and she had endured, while they faced the Kraken. After hearing the complete story, Sienna clapped her hands saying they had been fortunate.

“This means I was able to have a deep understanding with unni! I'm so happy. I'm so happy that I was able to help oppa.”

“There's a deep understanding between the two of you? When did you two develop... Ah.”

There was that incident. They had fought in broad daylight at the auction house. They spoke about squishy feelings that sounded as if they were revealing their hearts... No, they were probably acting.

Artpe didn't want to dig into it any further, so he shut his mouth. Instead, he grabbed Roa, who was perched on top of his head. She had been playing with his hair. He introduced Roa to them.

“This is Roa. She'll be with us from now on. As you can see, she isn't a normal cat. She's the Greed Beast.”

[Nyaa.]

Roa lifted a paw as she gave her greeting. Even if they were told that she was the Greed Beast, she looked like a dignified black cat on the outside. Sienna was at an age where she loved cute stuff, so her eyes shone. She sounded pleased.

“You are too cute! You are very very cute!”

However, Maetel tackled the issue from a totally unexpected direction.

“Artpe, is Roa a female cat or a male cat?”

“She's a female cat. Are you trying to compete even with a beast?”

“Grrrrrrr...”

[Nyaa...]

When Maetel heard that the cat was female, she started growling. Maetel became guarded. Roa, who had to face Maetel's hostility, was taken aback by it.

“She really is cute... No, Artpe-nim! This isn't the time to be doing this!”

There was a cordial atmosphere amongst the hero's party. Mycenae couldn't stand it, so she express her anger.

"Yes, yes. I'll go out. I'm coming. Tsk."

Artpe was lackadaisical as he got up. He put his robe around his body. No one instructed her to do so, but Roa entered into his robe out of her own accord. She hid atop his head.

It was the corpse of an enormous level 267 large monster. It was something rarely seen in the human world. Artpe felt depressed at the thought of facing the humans demonstrate their greed.

He got out of the bed first, then he waited for Maetel and Sienna to equip themselves. After they were done getting ready...

"Artpe, I'm hungry."

"Oppa~ I want to eat buttered corn."

"All right. Let's eat before we go."

[Nya!

"Ah ah! Really! Artep-niiim!"

They decided to go eat first.

"You are finally up?"

"We've been waiting for you, magician."

It was as if they had been trying to eat all the meals they had missed for the past two days. They enjoyed their meals thoroughly before they went to the square. It seemed all the foreign nobles, nobles of Diaz, the lord of Frate and the merchants were all gathered here. If things went a little bit awry, a much dirtier and thicker greed compared to what was seen in the auction house yesterday would emanate from them.

"Wow. It looks really big seen in this light... burp."

"You dummy, don't speak and burp at the same time. Where did your dignity as a human go to?"

"It really is big. Oppa killed this. Oppa is too cool."

Of course, they weren't the only ones there. The Kraken was so large that he wondered how they moved the corpse inland. Moreover, the Kraken's corpse had been kept intact. It was being guarded by an awe-inspiring number of guards... Artpe was baffled by all of this, so he asked the lord a question.

"I've only killed the Kraken. The Lunatic Wave has started, so it won't end until the winter ends. Is it ok for you all to be here doing nothing?"

"Since you've killed the Kraken, the size of the Wave has decreased. Two days has passed, yet the size of the Wave barely increased in size. We still have time. This is all thanks to you..."

"The more important thing right now is the Kraken!"

"Magician! We want to talk to you about divvying up the Kraken's loot!"

"Koo-hmmm..."

The foreign nobles were jumping up and down in excitement. The only one that was subdued amongst them was Frate's lord, count Melard. He probably also coveted the Kraken's corpse, but the defense of Frate was more important to him.

"Even if you don't raise your voices, the magician will understand your words. Everyone should calm down, and we should wait for him to speak. This will allow us to do this quickly, and it'll finish without any conflict."

"How can I do that! These bastards are trying to steal my share of the Kraken through unfair reason!"

"Who are you accusing of theft? I acquired the share to the barrier wall through the merchant over there! I bought it with my Magic Stones early on! I'm different from you guys, who held out giving the Magic Stones until the last moment. You only gave it up, because you didn't want to die!"

"Everyone should calm down! Aren't you ashamed of your behavior as nobles!"

“How can we calm down right now!”

This was why the count had remained here. If he vacated his post of watching over the corpse of the Kraken, he was worried a fight would have broken out. He was at a point where he wished the corpse of the Kraken would just disappear.

‘Thankfully, the lord has a good head on his shoulders. If people like him didn’t exist, the country would fall into ruins.’

Artpe shared a bitter laugh with the lord before he stepped forward. Everyone’s attention was focused on him. He let out a deep sigh, and he looked over the Kraken’s corpse. He had planned on talking about everyone’s share after he made an accurate assessment of the worth of the Kraken’s corpse.

‘Huh...’

However, he found an information that he hadn’t been able to catch with his Read all Creation ability when the Kraken was alive. During the fight, he hadn’t been focused on analyzing what was within its body. He had focused on its health and overall status of the Kraken. It was understandable as to how this had happened.

The Read All Creation was a god-like ability that allowed it to discern all information that could be seen through his eyes. However, there was a limit on how much information Artpe could receive and process. This was why he had trained his ability to show him information on topics he was focused on.

In conclusion, he had done a thorough search of the Kraken’s inner anatomy, and he was barely able to find an entity within it.

‘Besides the fact that there is something within it... It is still alive? Moreover, this being belongs to the race of... Wait a moment. This smells like another Quest...’

He had thought he had nothing to hide. Greed Beast Roa had looted the Kraken once already. The only thing that could be gained from the Kraken was its big body. Of course, the parts of its body were useful, but it wasn’t anything he coveted. This was why he had been ready to give away most of it after he gathered the important items... However, the story had changed once he found ‘another possibility’ within its corpse.

“All right. I am a magician that is second to none in this world in terms of fairness. I’ll make my verdict now. My three man party will take 50% of the loot.”

“You want 50%?! That is too high!”

“Artpe-nim! You only want 50 percent...”

If one was being frank, the hero party had done everything in this fight. Five hundred magic stones was worth an enormous amount, yet the Reinforcement of the barrier wall couldn't have been done without him. Moreover, Sienna and Maetel wouldn't have been there. The barrier wall wouldn't have been used to defeat the Kraken.

He had every right to take the entire corpse for himself, so he was being generous by announcing his 50% cut. Of course, the generosity was influenced by the fact that Roa had already looted the Kraken.

A portion of nobles couldn't hide their anger and discontent. They were barely able to keep their cool, but the nobles started making snide comments. Artpe snorted as he spoke in a disinterested manner.

“Next, there is the merchant that played a huge role in making the barrier wall, which blocked the Kraken. Mycenae's share is 20%.”

“That merchant tried to cheat us out of our items, yet you are giving her a 20% cut! Are you out of your mind !”

“If this particular merchant wasn't here, we would have all died. So shut the hell up!”

At Artpe's rough rebuke, the nobles shut their mouths.

Since Artpe wasn't a noble, they couldn't bend him to their wills through political pressure. He was also a powerful magician, so they couldn't subdue him through violence. If Artpe had tried to coerce them all through his magic, they could have shouted with righteous anger. They could have invoked the name of their countries. However, Artpe was speaking as the most accomplished combatant in this battle. He also spoke about the contributions made by the other people in battle. There was nothing they could gain by raising their voices.

“Then there are the nobles and merchants of Diaz, who provided 180 Magic Stones for the construction of the barrier wall. They sold it at a ‘cheap’ price. I believe 20% share is fair for them. The rest will take the 10% share. These are the foreign nobles and merchants, who paid 320 Magic Stones, in exchange for the right to be protected. That is it. Are there any objections?”

“T... ten percent... You want us to share 10 percent amongst the 100 of us? Y... you bastaaaaaaaard!”

The noble couldn't stand it any longer, so he unsheathed his sword. He pointed his sword at Artpe. However, neither Maetel and Sienna stepped forward to help Artpe. They knew how much strength and martial force he possessed.

Artpe's eyebrows twitched as he looked over the noble.

“I split it up fairly. Do you have a problem with it?”

“How is this fair! I've never experienced meeting such an obstinate person! I gave up three Magic Stones, and I want a fair compensation!”

“You should speak the whole truth. You've already received a fair compensation.”

Artpe extended his hand to grab the sword. The Mana Strings erupted like vines as it climbed up the sword. The Mana Strings reached the man's neck. The nobleman couldn't see the Mana Strings, but he could feel the pressure caused by them. He squeaked as his body tensed.

“I'm talking about your life. The rest is just a bonus. Am I not right?”

“Y... you bastard... You dare to threaten a marquis of the Diatin Kingdom!”

“I'm pretty sure you were the one to threaten me first. I'm pretty sure we made a clean transaction, yet you are going back on the terms of the deal. You are trying to double dip. If that isn't a form of threat, what is?”

“T... that wasn't a fair trade...”

When he added strength into the Mana String, the nobles sword broke cleanly. The bastard finally realized that he was facing someone with unfathomable abilities. He finally realized this fact.

“If you don't like the price you paid for your life, I can take it all back. Shall we settle our account after nullifying our previous agreement? I'm ready to do so.”

Artpe was trying to prevent more annoying incidents from occurring. He spoke as he gathered his Mana. The noble's face paled.

“M... my country won’t allow...”

“Do you really think that your northern country will be able to find me? No... If I decide to do something to you here, do you think I’ll leave behind any witnesses? You were shaking in fear behind the wall, while we killed the Kraken. It has only been two days, yet have you forgotten this fact?”

“Koo, kuh-huhk...”

Artpe’s imposing presence was mounting. It was as if the Demon King’s Four Heavenly King had made his appearance. The murderous intent rose until it choked their throats. It was hard to breath in this atmosphere.

“Such fearsome Mana...”

“He probably became much stronger after defeating the Kraken. He might be the strongest human in this world...!”

No one there could say anything. They could only feel sorry for the marquis of the Diatin Kingdom, who was feeling the full brunt of Artpe’s killing intent. Nevertheless, Artpe spoke words that held more venom than before.

“I’m playing along with you guys, since I don’t want to create more annoying incidents. If I kill you, it will be inevitable. I will have to destroy your country at some point in time... so how do you want to play this? Are you going to create trouble for me?”

No one there could laugh off Artpe’s words as a lie. They believed that Artpe was capable of destroying a nation. This was also true for the marquis of the Diatin Kingdom.

“N... no. I... I’m not going to”

“What about you guys?”

The nobles and merchants had been showing a bold front until a moment ago, yet they avoided meeting Artpe’s gaze right now. When he saw this, Artpe felt truly appalled by it.

If they knew they were going to end things like this, why did they all raise their voices? Why did they have to force Artpe to growl and show off his power? This was why he

considered humans to be no better than dogs. However, it was also true that Artpe had humored them, and he played on their level. Artpe was the same as them. He was also pathetic.

Still, he had to continue this pathetic farce to achieve his goal.

"All right. Since we've concluded our discussion, let us start distributing it. Since we no longer need to guard the corpse, you should quickly send the guards to the 2nd tier barrier wall. Those with no claims to the corpse of the Kraken should also go. You should be vigilant against the murderous intent of the monsters, not the greed of humans."

"I... I understand!"

"Understood, magician-nim!"

The square became quiet. There were greedy people still present, yet no one had the fortitude to reveal their greed.

"Let us start the looting."

"Y... yes sir."

The marquis of Dianan couldn't withstand Artpe's killing intent, so he had pissed his pants. Artpe discarded him, and he approached the Kraken's corpse. As he approached it, he gave orders to Roa in a low voice.

[When I mess with the corpse, I want you to play along by pouring out the worthless items.]

[Nyaa-ahhhh.]

Artpe messed with the Kraken. Roa opened her mouth.

The collaboration between the master and servant was perfect.

Chapter 67

The Quest Isn't Done Yet (2)

When Artpe started going through the motion of looting the corpse, Roa followed her master's directions. She spat out a massive number of items. She had worked hard to gather all these items, so she felt aggrieved. There were unshed tears in her purple eyes.

This was for the benefit of the people gathered around the Kraken. It looked as if the Kraken was pouring out Artifacts thanks to Artpe's looting.

"T... there are so many of them!?"

"Huh? I've seen this spear from somewhere before..."

"It was said that the Kraken swallowed whole ships that sank to the bottom of the ocean. I'm sure there are numerous weapons from each kingdom mixed in there."

Since the items from the auction house were mixed within the pile, it was reasonable to make such an assumption. However, as expected of a highly intelligent magical beast, Roa taken out all the unremarkable items. She was able to accurately gauge the amount of curse energy and evil energy within the items. This was why she was able regurgitate the items that were considered to be unremarkable. The sense of disharmony between the humans quickly dissipated.

"However... Mmmmmmm."

"Shit... My three Magic Stones came back as shit!"

It was a legendary monster that was over level 250. The Kraken had been the tyrant of the ocean, yet the loot looked extremely ordinary. They couldn't help but let out a sigh. It was to be expected. Roa had eaten all the corrupt energy within the items.

"Are there any Artifacts that was newly formed through the Kraken's Record and Mana?!"

“I guess not. Shit. I heard this happens sometimes. Why did it have to occur at this moment!”

“Maybe, this is a blessing in disguise. Even if such items existed, it would have ended in the hands of the magician. We would have been unable to do anything about it.”

Artpe had been worried Roa might have spat out something of high value. His eyes were fierce as he looked over the items. However, there was no way Roa would make a mistake. She had executed her task flawlessly. She was so thorough that Artpe wondered if it would have been better if she had spat out more items.

“This should be enough to cover your share. You guys can take it and divvy it up.”

“No, I think I’d rather want the Kraken’s corpse than these items...”

“What? You want me to take weapons and equipments that’s useless to a magician? Or are you trying to say you find equipments of my companions lacking?”

“It isn’t like that...”

When Artpe put some strength behind his glare, the noble quickly shrank into himself. Artpe was acting like a gangster, but since they didn’t know the specifics of what Artpe had done, they were unable to argue with him!

“Your share will be covered by this spear. You can have this shield...”

“How... How can this be! How! This can’t be possible! Why!”

“If I knew these items would drop, I wouldn’t have given up my Magic Stones... Shit!”

This was how the merchandise that were submitted by the nobles and merchants were returned to them as their share of the loot. The weapons and items were clean. There were no curses or evil energy imbued within them. No further troubles would arise from this! Mycenae already knew what was up. The white of her eyes were displayed as she mumbled to herself.

“This was why Artpe-nim said those words towards me earlier...”

“The Kraken’s corpse solely belongs to my party and Mycenae. People, who received their shares, should join the front line. Even if you are foreigners, you entered into the

Diaz Kingdom, so you all have obligations to help out against the Lunatic Wave. I'm sure you are aware of that fact?"

"There still might be something left within the Kraken's corpse!"

"So what if something remains within it?"

Artpe smirked as he questioned the nobel.

"What are you going to do about it? You qualify for 1/1000 share of the loot, so what right do you have to make such a demand?"

"I... I'll go to the barrier wall."

"Artpe is too cool..."

Artpe was successful in chasing off the nobles and merchants. If he took the entire Kraken for himself, they would have become suspicious. This was why he used his Mana Strings to slowly remove the tentacles. He was working on the 20% of the Kraken he would have to give to Mycenae.

Mycenae looked worried as she watched the humans leave. They were grinding their teeth in frustration. She grabbed his sleeve.

"Artpe-nim, it is truly satisfying to see you act this way, but it also means Diaz won't be able to avoid the backlash..."

"You are probably right. They can't do anything to me, so that'll pick on people they will have better odds against. They'll lodge complaints against the nobles of Diaz."

"I see. You are right."

"This will lessen the influence of the nobles, and it would give the puppet king some breathing room. Even if the nobles try to lessen the damage by shifting the blame to the puppet king, the result will be the same. Either the nobles will get weaker or the puppet king will become weaker. It is an either-or situation. In either case, it'll help Silpennon recover his kingdom later on."

"..."

Mycenae received an unexpected answer, so she was at a loss for words. She hadn't the faintest idea as to how far ahead Artpe was thinking about. Of course, Artpe wasn't thinking too seriously about his answer! He was just noting the fact that it wouldn't be too bad if things turned out like that.

"I'll cut them up for you roughly at this size. I'm sure I don't need to explain to you on how to process a Kraken?"

"Artpe-nim seems to know everything."

"I don't know everything. I just know what I know. I'm pretty sure I told you this before."

Mycenae's share was quite generous. She was given half of the tentacles, and a good amount of the Kraken's body was carved out for her. It was more than enough for the Anywhere company to celebrate her return. The only problem was the fact that she still had to haul this big body parts back.

"I heard the body could be used as ingredient to create a Mana reagent. It can also be used to make nutritious tonics. It is the part of the body with the most use."

"However, the most coveted part is the tentacles."

Roa had absorbed all the curses and the Demonic gene, so the Kraken had been weakened. Still, a Kraken was a Kraken.

The tentacles became tougher in death. Each tentacle had tens of thousands of suction cups, and hooks on the surface. The tentacles were frightening. Many weapons could be made with just one tentacle. Amongst all the weapons that could be made, the most famous one was a whip made from the Kraken's tentacle.

"There are parts we can sell from the head. You can look forward to that. Ah, you should give up on the ink. I'm going to use it."

Artpe knew he was very lucky. The Kraken had been gripped with madness, so it wouldn't have been strange to see the Kraken swivel its head in all directions to spray its ink. He didn't know if the Kraken liked to fight only with its body or if it was unable to expel any of its curse. The Kraken hadn't used its ink during the battle. It either rammed the wall with its body or it swung its tentacles.

“This is the Kraken’s ink? I’ve never heard of it.”

“I can see why. It is usually used for curse magic. Moreover, there’s also the fact that not many people survive an encounter with a Kraken to spread such information.”

“E... even if you want to sell it to me, I won’t buy it!”

Maybe this was the aftereffect of what had gone on in Frate. Just the mention of curses made her face turn deathly pale. Mycenaë’s ears fluttered as she backed away. He cackled when he saw this.

He changed the subject.

“Actually, it isn’t only used with curses. It is used in creating high rank magic books. A massive amount of pure Mana was infused deeply within the ink through the years, so a Magician could easily create a magic book with this ingredient. These magic books won’t be absorbed into one’s Record after reading it once. It’s like the Demite Gemstone. It absorbs Record to evolve. It supports the Magician as it becomes enriched.”

“That has nothing to do with curses! Eek. You are making fun of the trauma I suffered...!”

Mycenaë’s body and ears trembled from the indignation she felt. Artpe cackled once again when he saw this. Maetel was watching Artpe from behind him. There was a slightly withdrawn look in her eyes.

“Artpe, let’s hurry up and take what is ours. Then we can go rest. I have something I want to talk to you about.”

“...Maetel, your voice sounds a bit scary.”

“I’m just too tired right now. I’ll become better soon if you are by my side. If you are near me...”

“Your voice just turned scarier...”

Artpe lost his nerve at the odd energy coming from her. He could no longer open his mouth. Mycenaë also felt as if she would be murdered by Maetel if she remained here. Under such fears, she called forth the staff from her company. She quickly ran away

after she gathered everything she could gather.

The butchering of the Kraken continued. There were still some people left. These particular humans still held lingering attachment towards the Kraken, so they had remained to watch.

However, they soon realized Artpe was just butchering the Kraken. There was nothing new that could be gained from the Kraken. They had no choice but to leave. This was how Artpe passed the time as he waited for everyone to disappear from this place.

However, the lord of Frate continued to wait until the end. It was quite unexpected.

“From what I’ve seen of you, I thought you would be the first to run to the top of the barrier wall.”

Artpe paused from his task of butchering the Kraken, and he spoke towards the lord. As if he had been waiting for this, the lord nodded his head as he spoke.

“Of course, the Lunatic Wave is important. However, I thought this would be the only time I would be able to talk to you.”

When he heard those words, Artpe paused for a brief moment. It was imperceptible. Artpe commended the lord inside for figuring that out, but his outer appearance remained calm.

“What are you talking about? I’m in the same boat as you. I can’t get out of here until winter.”

“Is that so? I got the impression that you were going to leave immediately. That is why I wanted to express my thanks before that happened. Even if you aren’t leaving soon, I’ll give you a token of my appreciation. Thank you.”

The lord spoke those words as he pushed a small pouch towards Artpe. The pouch was imbued with fairly deep magic. It was none other than a Dimensional Pouch...

“I would have liked to have repaid you with a better item, yet this is all I have left. Still, in terms of how much it can hold and its ability to reduce weight, it was evaluated to be the best in this country. It should have plenty of space to put in the Kraken.”

Artpe had been listening half-heartedly to the lord’s explanation as he took the item.

His eyes turned round in surprise. He couldn't help it.

"What the... You weren't exaggerating. This really is an amazing treasure."

Dimensional Pouches were somewhat common. However, when one tried to find the better functioning Dimensional Pouches, the price increase was very steep. Then there were the ones that couldn't be bought with money. This pouch was part of the collection of items that were made by Archmages from the distant past.

If a Dimensional Pouch was able to contain the incredibly large Kraken, which was several hundred meters in length, it was well beyond the realm of being a normal Dimensional Pouch.!

"You know you will be taking losses from the result of my actions, yet you are giving me such a precious item...?"

"Loss?"

The lord smirked at Artpe's reply. He looked at Artpe with kind eyes as he spoke.

"Countless lives within the city were saved, because of you. When I think about the weight of the blood and tears that could have been on my shoulders, I can laugh off any threats those bastards can come up with."

"..."

He hadn't expected such a great response from the lord. Artpe became silent. In his past life, he had seen a lot of hypocrisy and pretense from humans. This was why he knew the lord was speaking the truth.

'Yes, I saw so many disgusting humans that I forgot about people like him. They are very small in number, but there really are humans like him in this world.'

It felt as if he was hit on the head. When he was faced with the endlessly selfish humans, he had fought fire with fire. He acted only in his own interest as a response. This was why this sudden attack by the lord had hit its mark.

"You..."

The lord wasn't done. He continued to speak.

“We truly fell short. We made such a foolish mistake by trying to protect the wrong things. We were able to avoid an irreversible calamity thanks to you. However, it seems humans are creatures that can’t help but make the same mistake over and over again. We once again showed such crude behaviors in front of you... Still, I want to make sure that you know this truth. There are a lot of people out there that are of like mind as me.”

In his past life, Artpe had lived for several hundred years. This human had lived not even one fifth that number, yet he was able to see through Artpe. Artpe felt he still had a long way to go. He couldn’t stop his laughter from coming out.

A crinkle started to form at the edges of the lord’s eyes. The lord’s intelligent eyes reflected his years of experience. He looked straight at Artpe as he brought his words to a close.

“We know the worth of what you have done. We cannot do what you can do, but there are many people out there that respect what you have done. Please continue to help the other humans. I know you are disappointed in humanity, but there will come a day when you will find hope from humanity. I truly believe this.”

“Hah...”

It was a complete defeat.

However, it didn’t feel too bad.

Artpe took the Dimensional Pouch being offered. He nodded his head as if it couldn’t be helped.

“I’m just one human. The fact that I become disillusioned and disappointed by humanity doesn’t mean it’ll greatly affect the human world... All right, lord. I’ll be sure to remember your words.”

“It is very fortunate that you think so.”

The lord was past being middle-aged, and he was at the cusp of entering his latter years. When he saw the spite within Artpe’s eyes lessen by a small amount, he let out a truly bright laughter. Artpe was strangely embarrassed when faced with the lord’s smile. He snorted as he turned his gaze away. However, words that didn’t match the expression on his face leaked out.

“I will be leaving soon, but... It was my fault for destroying the reinforced barrier wall. I’ll reconstruct the first barrier wall.”

“No, the barrier wall was used to defeat the Kraken. It was done out of necessity. Moreover, the place where the 1st barrier wall stood is filled with water and monsters now...”

“Do you really think that’ll be a problem for me?”

“...no, it won’t be a problem. Then I’ll head to the frontline ahead of you. I’ll say this again. Thank you very much.”

The lord had already seen what Artpe could do. The lord laughed as he expressed his thanks once again. He headed towards the frontline where the humans and monsters were confronting each other. He didn’t turn around to look at Artpe.

Artpe’s 3-man party was the only ones left there.

“Are we going to leave this place too, Artpe?”

“We’ll have to finish butchering this bastard.”

The work he had to do right now had to be done away from prying eyes. However, he had received a special tool. He didn’t really need to stay here.

He put the entire Kraken within his pouch. The pouch remained light. He grinned in satisfaction as he turned to look at his party.

“All right. Let’s go receive our next Quest.”

“Quest!?”

The Kraken had fulfilled its role, and it exited the stage in an ignominious manner.

It was time to meet the new character that would appear from within its stomach. A new stage would be set.

Chapter 68

The Quest Isn't Done Yet (3)

The humans were in a heated battle at the port. They were trying to stop the advance of monsters that were coming out from the ocean. No one was the wiser when they left the city to head towards the mountain. No, there would be one person within the city, who would notice. Etna knew he had left, but she didn't follow after the party. It seemed she was going to behave by waiting at the inn.

“I think we are far enough.”

When he reached a large clearing, Artpe took out the corpse of the Kraken from his Dimensional Pouch. He had taken off a lot of parts for Mycenae, yet the corpse was still enormous. After butchering the tentacles and body of the Kraken, the corpse was at a size where the dissection of the corpse wouldn't be too great of a challenge.

“We are almost done with the body... All right. Let's put that aside for now.”

“You are going to use it on the barrier wall? Right, Artpe?”

Artpe couldn't help but laugh at Maetel's sharp insight. For some reason, she became unusually smart regarding any work related to Artpe.

“That right. I'm going to dry the Kraken's body, and I will grind it into fine powder. It'll become a great ingredient that will allow me to Reinforce various materials.”

“As expected, Artpe is too kind.”

“I'm just trying to restore the barrier wall, so they can't use it as a talking point against me.”

No one believed the bullshit Artpe was spouting. Artpe simultaneously activated several magic as he spoke. He let out fire, wind and Mana Strings. He dried the body of the Kraken, and he minced it into fine powder. After putting away the powder inside his Dimensional Pouch, the only part left was the Kraken's head.

“Hoo-ooh... Let’s do this.”

It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that the head was the most important part of the Kraken. Artpe let out his Mana Strings, and his movement became more careful.

“First, I’m going to split open its head, and I have to carefully extract the ink sac.”

“The sac is pretty small compared to the enormous size of the Kraken.”

“If the sac is capable of producing a lot, it doesn’t have to be large. Here it is...”

Then he added something special to it. It was something only Artpe could do. He Reinforced it. He Reinforced it twice, and the ink sac went through a transformation. Its size decreased to a point where Artpe could hold it with one hand. Of course, the ink within the sac was also Reinforced.

However...

“Huh...”

“What’s wrong, Artpe?”

He had a hunch that he would be able to Reinforce it one more time. When he had this feeling, he tilted his head in puzzlement. Normally, he was able to Reinforce an item once or twice. It was a limit that couldn’t be surpassed without the support of ingredients like the Magic Stones.

‘Did my skill evolve thanks to the fight with the Kraken?’

It was as he suspected. He had to rampantly use his Reinforcement skill in the fight against the Kraken, and it allowed him to acquire some kind of an Achievement. When his EXP was being tallied, his Reinforcement skill had grown.

As a result of this venture, Artpe’s Reinforcement skill had reached level 51. When he arrived at Frate, his skill level had been 43. He had gone through an amazing burst of growth.

No, the skill level wasn’t the important part right now. The important part was the fact that he could use Reinforcement three times on his party’s equipment without the need of Magic Stones.

“Hey, you guys should come here too.”

“Yes!”

Artpe immediately Reinforced the ink sac. Then he Reinforced his boots and the other equipments of his party members in one fell swoop. The effect was amazing. His boots had already boasted cheat-like abilities, but the equipments of his companions were close to reaching its shelf-life. Their equipments were perfectly restored, and they had evolved into something better. He was satisfied with the result.

“Oppa! Oppa! The hammer can store and release vibration now!”

“Finally, the true power of that metal type will be revealed...”

“Wow. I can shoot my Beam twice in a row!”

“Yes, let’s just call your move as the Beam from now on.”

If he had his way, he wanted to Reinforce the Demite Gemstone. However, the Demite Gemstone had a sense of self, so it was like trying to Reinforce a person. It was impossible to do for now. However, it also meant that he would be able to Reinforce it some day in the future...

‘I’ll worry about it when I reach that point. The more important thing right now is in front of my eyes.’

Artpe shook his head from side to side as he stopped churning his thoughts. The completed ink sac was the perfect size for portability. He hung it inside his robe. Even if the Kraken slammed its body into him, Artpe’s bones would be crushed, but the ink sac wouldn’t burst open. Aside from the ink sac, most of the remaining organs became food for Roa. He gave her parts like the liver. These were organs that possessed strong Mana, yet it was poisonous for human consumption.

[Nyaa, nyaaaaaa.]

“All right. Since you are going to eat all of this, you have to spit out the other items later on.”

[Nyaaa.]

The loot given to the nobles were fake. The true Artifacts containing the Kraken's Record and Mana was within Roa's stomach.

It seemed the innards of the Kraken prepared by Artpe was pretty good. Roa didn't think too much on it as she readily nodded her head. Artpe scratched the underside of her chin as he continued the butchering.

After a short amount of time had passed, the head was completely dismantled. The only thing left was its enormous stomach. When she looked over it, Maetel's eyes turned round.

"Artpe, there's something alive inside!"

"You should unsheathe your sword. Be ready."

"...yes."

The meaning behind Artpe's words were simple to discern... There was a living being inside the Kraken's stomach, and it was a monster. Maetel didn't dig too deep into the subject. She unsheathed and gripped her sword.

"All right. Here I go."

When Artpe confirmed that she was ready, he controlled his Mana Strings to carefully split open the stomach.

From within it, a beauty with dazzling white skin and ocean-colored hair appeared.

"Koo-ooh... Hoo-oohk..."

She had a very distressed complexion, and she was gasping for air. There was no vitality or magical energy remaining within her body. She would have died within a day or two if she had remained inside the Kraken.

Moreover, the Demonic gene had invaded deep into her body... It was obvious that she had been a sacrificial lamb for the Demonification experiment. It wasn't a coincidence that she was inside the Kraken's stomach. No, if he considered the worst case scenario, she had been allowed to be swallowed by the Kraken as part of the experiment. This might all be interconnected.

“Eeeeeeeeek!”

However, Maetel didn't care about the deep implications of all of this. She didn't care about the condition of the woman. The only thing that mattered was the fact that the woman was naked. Maetel grinded her teeth in anger as she pointed her sword at Artpe.

“Now I will use this sword on Artpe's eyes!”

“Calm down. I didn't rescue her, because she's a woman!”

“Unni, this monster is suffering under the same symptoms as me. I'm sure oppa was able to identify this.”

“Oohk.”

She was barely able to put away her sword when she heard Sienna's words. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

“Mermaids possess above average intelligence compared to other normal monsters. If I'm able to converse with her, I can acquire information from her. This is why I'm trying to keep her existence a secret. That is the reason why I'm trying to save her.”

“What are you going to do after you extract the information?... Will you kill her afterwards?”

Maetel had once declared that all monsters were her enemies since they all did bad things. However, it seemed she didn't have the courage to point her sword towards a mermaid groaning from weakness. Artpe was inwardly relieved by this fact. He shook his head from side to side.

“I won't kill anyone that will help me. I'll make a similar arrangement as the one I made with Deyus, so you don't have to worry about it.”

“Yes, I understand. However, it would be great if we can clothe her as soon as possible.”

“Jeez. She's a monster.”

“However, her body is amazing! This isn't good for Artpe's eyes!”

It was true that she was a monster, but the mermaid looked exactly like a human on the outside. It did feel weird to stare at her naked body. Artpe quickly placed a cloth over her naked body.

[Nyaa?]

“Yes, you know your stuff. I’ll leave it to you.”

Roa sensed that it was her turn, so she trotted off of Artpe’s shoulder. She hopped onto the mermaid’s stomach, and she opened her mouth wide.

[Nyaaaaaaaaahng.]

That was all she needed to do. The Demonic gene, which was dominating the mermaid, was sucked into Roa’s mouth. It was a clean extraction. Artpe knew she possessed this talent, yet he couldn’t help but be surprised when he witnessed it in action.

“I’m glad that the Chaos Egg absorbed the Obsidian of Greed...”

“It really is an absurd ability. If we had Roa from the beginning, neither I nor oppa would have suffered.”

At one point, Sienna had been in the same situation as the mermaid. She had been reborn as an Evil Reflector through Artpe’s hands. It seemed the sight of the all of this was leaving behind a fairly deep impression on Sienna.

If she hadn’t become an Evil Reflector, she wouldn’t have had to live a life full of battles. Was she sad about this fact? Artpe had such thoughts for the first time as he watched Sienna. She was always laughing, so he might be under a misconception. Maybe she...

“However, I’m able to travel with oppa and unni thanks to what happened. I prefer my current situation, oppa.”

“Are you learning mind reading skill with Maetel?”

“Heh heh.”

He couldn’t even have his own thoughts around his party members. Artpe grumbled as he retrieved Roa. She let out a playful yawn. She had completely disposed of the curses and Demonic gene that had been dominating the mermaid’s body.

Aside from the weakened state of the mermaid's body, she was fine. Basically, she went from a critically fatal state to a normal fatal state.

"Sienna."

"Yes."

Sienna put down her hammer, and she approached the mermaid. Sienna extended a hand towards the mermaid. Her warm magical energy flowed into the mermaid's body. The mermaid immediately opened her eyes, which was ocean blue. It was the same color as her hair. She let out a groan.

"Koo-hoohk, hoohk?"

Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he opened his mouth. The words that flowed out of his mouth wasn't the language of the humans. It was the language of the monsters. It was specifically a language that would allow him to communicate with underwater monsters like the mermaid.

[You regained consciousness in one go. Since the Demonic gene was fostered within you, you should be in pain right now. However, your body is being purified right now, so you should endure it.]

"Kahk, keh-hoohk!"

How great would it be if one could endure pain just because someone told one to endure it? Sienna's magical energy spread towards the entirety of the mermaid's body. It bolstered her vitality, and her wounds were being healed. However, the mermaid couldn't endure the pain of the healing process, so she screamed continuously.

It might have been better if she hadn't regained consciousness. She suffered, because she had immediately regained consciousness. Fortunately, Sienna's Mana was specialized. She was able to bolster the magic within the mermaid. She was able to finish the healing in short order.

"Kah-oohk, hee-koo-ah-oooooh..."

Sienna took back her hand, and she backed away. Her treatment was finished, yet it seemed the mermaid was still in the throes of pain. She intermittently let out a moan as she crawled up into a ball.

There were tears in her pure eyes, and one could see fear towards the humans surrounding her. Artpe shook his head as he spoke to her.

[You'll be fine now. The wounds, curses and Demonic gene are no more. You won't die if you obey my words.]

It was such a sinister statement that he would have been worthy if he was chosen to be the Demon King. The slender mermaid shook in fear when she heard his words. If Maetel was able to understand his words, she would have been angry with him. Unfortunately, she didn't know the language of the monsters.

However, the answer that was given by the mermaid was unexpected.

[I... I understand. You rescued me from overwhelming danger. I'll will serve you as my master.]

[Huh?... ah. So that's how it is.]

Even amongst the humans, there was a debate as to whether mermaids were monsters or a kindred species. They were one of the races where the opinions were split.

When the Luatic Wave approached, they lost some of their sense of reason. They appeared alongside the normal monsters to fight the humans. This was why the popular opinion was that the mermaids were monsters. However, they were also unique in the fact that mermaids of high intelligence were able to escape the effects of the Lunatic Wave.

Moreover, the ones with the high intelligence were famous for repaying their debts no matter the cost. If the debt was small, they repaid the debt through gems from the ocean. If the debt was large, they dedicated their lives to the person they were beholden to. They became subservient.

'Normally, people interact with mermen and mermaids as enemies. Therefore, it is very hard for them to incur a big enough debt where they will dedicate their lives to you. This rarely happened in history.'

If Maetel found out about this, it would become a huge headache. Maetel didn't care if she was a monster or not. Maetel considered all pretty female to be potential enemies... Still, he had saved her with the aim to mine information from her. He would just release her from her debt after things resolved itself somewhat.

Artpe easily turned the page of his thoughts as he spoke to her.

[You probably have a decent idea of what this mess is all about. I'll get straight to the point. Someone purposefully got close to you guys, and a curse was spread amongst you all. Am I right?]

[Yes, someone did do that.]

[Why were you inside the Kraken's belly?]

[The bastard captured me, and he gave me to the Kraken as food. The Kraken was too powerful to control through brute force. This was why they placed a curse on me, and the curse was passed onto the Kraken when it ate me.]

Mmm. As expected, these were sons of bitches of the highest order. Artpe nodded in a solemn and dignified manner as he queried her.

[Is he still within the ocean?]

[He is still there. He has taken over the deep sea mermaid kingdom of Anaid. He is making the curses there.]

[Do you know his name?]

[I do. He is a man named Madelrude.]

When he heard her answer, he felt a sense of incongruity. He tilted head in puzzlement. He had heard this name before. Soon, he came up with the answer.

“Medelrude was the name of the previous duke of Diaz...?”

He realized the truth that he hadn't finished his first Quest yet. Artpe was barely at to realize this fact.

Chapter 69

The Quest Isn't Done Yet (4)

He immediately gathered all the information he needed to know from the mermaid. Then he took off his own camouflage artifact. He put it on the mermaid. (Maetel once again became enraged at this gesture.) After he somewhat disguised her identity, he gave her a skirt and an adequate top for her to wear. Then he returned to the city with her.

Of course, the Lunatic Wave was still going on, so the streets of the city was as quiet as ever. Everyone was trying to survive until the end of the Lunatic Wave, so they had changed their way of life.

“Fortunately, there aren’t any people here that’ll make a fuss after seeing you.”

[Human clothes are uncomfortable.]

[Endure it until we reach a place with no human eyes.]

[Understood.]

A mermaid’s lower body turned into that of a fish when one was underwater. However, when one came out to dry land, the mermaid’s lower body naturally turned into human legs. The mermaid became bipedal.

Even if mermaids were capable of walking on two legs, human clothes were incredibly uncomfortable to them. The mermaid was restless as she kept grabbing and letting go of her skirt.

[Do you perhaps have a name?]

[I do. My name is Sheryll Anaid. For your convenience, you can just call me Sheryll.]

[All right. You probably won’t have any occasions to call me by my name, but my name is Artpe... Wait a moment. Did you just say Anaid?]

He reacted way too late. Artpe had been trying to foster a friendly atmosphere by exchanging each other's names. However, something about her name had caught his attention, and he furrowed his brows.

[Didn't you just say the mermaid kingdom was called Anaid?]

[That is correct. I am the 37th Queen of the Anaid Kingdom.]

They were like fishes. Their population number was incredibly high. Fortunately for Artpe, Sheryll wasn't the future Queen, so he hoped there wouldn't be any complications. As he had these thoughts, he opened the door to the inn, and he led her in.

"So that's what I did to the Kraken..."

"Give me one more beer! I still can't forget that bastard's face..."

"Hey, innkeeper!"

It was as if the quiet street outside had been a lie. The 1st floor of the inn was crowded with people. Soldiers that were finished with their shifts on the barrier wall were inside the inn. Then there were the mercenaries that were quickly called into the city. There were even merchants from other countries present there.

Artpe didn't want to fault these men, who were boasting as they drank alcohol. If one thought about the endless stream of Lunatic Wave in the near future, it was good for them to rest and let off steam like this. When the next shift on the wall was relieved, the inns and pubs would continue to be busy.

"Uh. Look over there..."

"It's a woman."

"My eyes just brightened. She brightens up my eyes."

Artpe's party had entered in the midst of such men. They glossed over the presence of Artpe, but the atmosphere clearly changed when they saw the women, who followed in behind him. It wasn't just a single woman. Three beautiful women had come in.

Two of them looked young, and they were equipped with imposing weapons. The ratio

of men to women was incredibly high inside the inn, so they became the focus of the men.

“What about them?”

“Hey, you better avert your eyes. You’ll follow my advice if you don’t want to die!”

However, everyone quietly retracted their gazes from them.

First, they remembered the sight of Maetel and Sienna fighting each other in the square. They had been incredibly scary. Secondly, they had crushed and cut down the Demons, who had mowed down the humans as if they were stalks of wheat. Lastly, the person that stopped the Kraken was here. The monster would have devoured Frate and the entirety of Diaz if he hadn’t been here. Everyone here knew the face of the young magician, who possessed incredible amount of magical energy.

“For him, I might...”

“I can see why the two of them were fighting over him.”

“I heard he has a dirty personality. My employer grinded his teeth with vexation because of him.”

“Shut up, you idiot!”

Artpe completely ignored all the idiots gathered here as he approached the counter. There was a woman working behind the counter. She was working the counter instead of the innkeeper. The innkeeper was delivering food, but he quickly retook his position. He greeted Artpe.

“Wow. You are back! You are a magician!”

“I’m not here for anything important. I’ve added another party member, so I want to ask you if I have any additional fees I have to pay...?”

“All I can say is that I’m jealous of you! Shit! You already gained one more woman in such a short span of time! Moreover, she is very pretty!”

The innkeeper was brutally honest! Of course, his reaction would change if he found out that Sheryll was a monster. Still, it was pretty entertaining to see the innkeeper’s

vexation, so he let it be.

“So should I give you more money or not?”

“You are taking all of them into the same room as if it is all in the day’s work... No, I don’t need it! If you are able to sleep comfortably within such a small room, I don’t care if you bring three or five women! Do as you want! You can sleep with them all there!”

“I get it, so stop crying while you speak...”

The innkeeper suddenly grabbed Artpe’s hand. He spoke with sincere eyes.

“I heard you were the magician that killed the Kraken. Thank you for protecting our city. Yes, if it is, you deserve it...! Please fulfill my dream in my stead! You can fulfill my fantasy of having enough wives to fill up a villa...”

“You are being really creepy. Can you let go of my hand?”

The inn keeper had met a lucky adventurer, who would be able fulfill his dream. It seemed he was in a good mood. The innkeeper declared in a generous manner.

“Eh-eet! I’m in a good mood! I’ll provide dinner for you guys for free!”

“Since you are providing a free service, can you deliver it to our room?”

Delivery service was impossible, but it was possible to take out the food. Artpe took the buttered corn cobs, which were the specialty of this inn, and other hot foods to his room with his party members.

[Hoo-ooh.]

When they entered the room, they were free from the gazes of other people. This was why Sheryll immediately threw off her skirt. Maetel immediately launched herself towards Artpe, and Artpe swiftly dodged Maetel as he threw a cloth towards Sheryll. He praised himself, since he somehow managed not to upset the plates he was carrying.

[Cover yourself with this!]

[Understood]

After the suffocating and desperate struggle, the four of them settled into the room.

Maetel remained wary of Sheryll. Sienna hugged Roa, who had exited Artpe's hood. Unlike Maetel, who was wary of Roa for being a female cat, Sienna had taken a liking to Roa.

[...are you sure that is edible?]

[Huh? You mean this? Try it.]

Sheryll's eyes were planted on the buttered corn cob. He wordlessly handed one over to her. Sheryll hadn't been fed properly, so her bony hands closed around the butter corn cob. She started to slowly gnaw on it.

[You should eat it slowly. You are healed, so you won't have any problems digesting the food. However, you aren't immune from a stomach ache...]

[Understood. Thank you very much.]

He spoke as he gave each party member a cob.

"You can call the mermaid as Sheryll from now on. She'll be with us until the Quest ends. She will 'only' be with us until the Quest ends... She is a monster, but she won't oppose us. You can be at ease."

"Quest... That horrible curse is spreading inside the ocean, oppa?"

"The archduke is a bad man. That curse should never see the light of day again."

He had been worried that they would focus on Sherryl. Fortunately, Sienna and Maetel was focused on the Quest. He nodded his head as he spoke.

"You already heard this from me, but the ones responsible for the demonification experiments are hiding underneath the ocean. This includes the archduke, and his remaining forces. He is probably with some Demons..."

In the process of suppressing the archduke's forces, Artpe had seen the work of the artifacts released by the Demon King's army. He had suspected that the Demon King's

army wouldn't let go of the archduke so easily. It seemed they had retrieved the archduke.

Madelrude was the ex-archduke, and he was a noncombatant. He took his remaining magicians, who had experimented with the curse, to the ocean. At the command of the Demon King's army, he seized the mermaid kingdom of Anaid, and he had started spreading the curse.

"When he coveted the seat of monarchy after chasing out the previous king, I recognized what kind of man he was. You really get tired of facing someone like that."

"I can never forgive him."

"...oppa, you are going to punish him?"

Both Maetel and Sienna had memories regarding the Demonification curse, so they couldn't laugh about it. Blood, tears and death of countless people dwelled within their memories.

They had thought everything was resolved without them needing to attack the palace. That was why Artpe's party had quickly went on their way. However, now that the archduke was in their way, there was no reason not to tidy up the loose end. Artpe bared his teeth as he replied.

"Of course."

In truth, he wasn't doing this just to carry out the Quest. Artpe bit into his own buttered corn cob as he spoke.

"If all of this hadn't occurred, we would have been on a boat by now. I've already told you that our destination is Aedia, right?"

"Yes. However, the Lunatic Wave..."

"That's right. Basically, any travel across the ocean is blocked when a Lunatic Wave occurs. Since all ports are shut down, no ships can depart. However, that doesn't mean we can't cross the ocean. If we can't travel atop it, we can travel underneath it."

"Underneath the ocean...? Ah."

Sienna tilted her head in puzzlement, but her eyes turned round as she turned to look at Sherryl. She was still busy gnawing at the buttered corn cob, but her existence was a form of an answer.

"That's right. You said it was an underwater kingdom."

"Yes, whether it is humans or monsters, the maintenance of roads is the first thing that has to occur when building a nation. I'm thinking about borrowing their road to cross to Aedia."

He had never been to the mermaid kingdom, but he knew of their existence. Moreover, he knew that they had created an underwater passageway that was free from being attacked by other monsters. He had heard about this before.

However, he had no use for such roads in his past life, and if it was possible, he didn't want to use it in his current life. However, the path atop the ocean was block, and they had a reliable guide now. There was no reason for them to hesitate using the underwater road.

"So that's the main reason why oppa helped Sherryl. Ah, it will also be necessary for us to fight the bad guys in the process."

"You are correct. Do you guys have a rough idea of what is going on?"

"Yes..."

[Hmm... Mmm. Hmmm.]

The humans were talking about whether they should save the mermaid kingdom. It was unknown as to whether she could understand them. Sherryl was still focused on eating the corn cob. She had the look of a mature human woman, yet she was showing an innocent side of her. She possessed a subtle allure.

At that moment, Maetel whipped her head around towards Artpe.

"Artpehhhhh?"

"No, I wasn't charmed by her. It's the truth."

Shit. He was sure these girls were using mind reading skills! Why couldn't he confirm

it through his Read All Creation ability!

Artpe clicked his tongue. He turned his gaze away as if to avoid her interrogation. He thought about the fact that he didn't have the time to play around here like this. He stood up from his seat as if the right moment had come.

"You guys should eat dinner then rest. We'll head out tomorrow."

[Nyaa.]

Roa had behaved herself until now as she remained in Sienna's embrace. However, she jumped back into Artpe's hood. Maetel pouted as she argued with Artpe.

"You are running away, because the topic got difficult."

"What about oppa?"

"I have things I have to resolve in the city. I have to put up the barrier wall, and... I have someone I have to meet."

"When you say you have to meet someone..."

Maetel mumbled to herself as she repeated his words. The light in her eyes changed in a flash. Until now, she had the eyes of a wife worried about her husband cheating. However, her eyes currently held the look of a maiden trying to hold back her lover from heading into battle.

"Artpe, you can't go with that woman. Okay?"

If Sienna had said this, he would have understood it since she had met Etna. Maetel hadn't met her, yet she was somehow able to discern what was going on. This was the first thought that came into his mind.

"If you are so worried, you want to follow me?"

"...no, I trust Artpe. Artpe said you don't like older women, so I'll believe in your words."

Her face said that she didn't believe her own words at all. Moreover, he had no idea how she found out Etna was an older woman. Artpe became a bit upset, but this was

karma. He gently brushed Maetel's head, who was looking at him with worried eyes. He wasn't sure what was going through her head, but he wished his actions would calm her down.

"I'll be back."

"...yes."

"Don't stay out too late!"

Sherryl was still gnawig at the corn cob. Artpe smirked as he told Sherryl to wait for him here. Then he exited the room.

He started walking toward the Jaime's Inn located in sector C.

Chapter 70

The Quest Isn't Done Yet (5)

Jaime's inn should have been similar to the inn occupied by Artpe's party. However, the atmosphere inside the inn was subdued. Artpe opened the door to the inn. When he entered, he saw that every single person had their head buried in their table.

"...what the hell?"

[Nyaa.]

Artpe surveyed his surrounding. He wonder if they were in mourning. A female waitress ran up to him, and she whispered to him.

"A man tried to make a pass on a pretty woman, and she..."

The following story was something a normal male shouldn't hear if one wanted to maintain one's mental health.

Indeed, everyone was taking some time to extend their sympathy towards this man. Artpe also gave a short prayer. He prayed for the rest of the man's life. He would no longer be able to have any children now, so he wished the man to live an enjoyable life. Ah... He wouldn't be able to enjoy himself.

After he finished his prayer, he raised his head. The female employee asked him a question with a solemn expression on her face.

"Would you like to order something?"

"No. I'm here to meet someone..."

Before Artpe ascended the stairway, he wondered if he should go put on a codpiece. However, he gave up on the idea, since he couldn't stop her if she truly wanted to harm him.

[Nyaa, nyaa-ahhhhh?]

"I need a chastity belt instead of a codpiece? No, she has a law-abiding spirit. She won't lay her hands on an underage male."

[Nyaa...]

Artpe ignored Roa's narrowed eyes, and he knocked on the door at the end of the third floor. It was the corner room. She had been constantly emitting a thin thread of magical energy. It allowed him to locate her. Even if he didn't have his Read All Creation ability, he would have been able to easily locate her room.

[Come in.]

"I'm coming in."

Artpe heard Etna's reply. He relaxed as he opened the door when he heard her calm voice. For a split second, he worried a sack would be placed over his head. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

"Artpe."

"Hello, Etna."

A beauty with burning red eyes was standing there.

"...yes, hello. Are you feeling a bit better?"

"Yes."

He thought the greeting they had exchanged hadn't been that bad, but Etna remained still. She didn't budge from her initial position after opening the door. Artpe felt the need to say something, so he opened his mouth.

"I came here to give you what I promised. I wanted to come here as soon as possible, but I lost consciousness."

"It's all right. I haven't been waiting too long..."

Etna had a soft smile on her lips as she spoke. However, she clamped her mouth shut when she saw the sword that appeared in Artpe's hand.

The long sword had a red sword aura, and it was named the Netherworld Flame Sword of Madness. It was famous for being the sword of a knight, who performed admirably during the rebellion within the Diaz kingdom. In truth, the Fire Spirit Meltia was sealed within the sword. It allowed the user to perform incredible feats, but in the end, it took the wielder's life as the price. It was a demonic sword.

Of course, Roa had completely extracted all the curse from it, so the Fire Spirit could leave the sword if it wanted to. This was obvious but the curse was something that couldn't be harvested so easily even if one wanted to do it.

"...no, I'm not alright anymore after seeing this. The curse... How were you able pull this off... No, if I start talking about it, it'll lead me to talk about all the other thing I want to ask you."

He was sure he had done everything she wanted, yet Etna's expression remained absolutely serious. Her mouth moved several times as if she was about to say something, but in the end, she closed her eyes shut as she sat down on top of the bed.

The brief silence felt as if it had lasted an eternity. A hollow voice flowed out from her mouth...

"Artpe... Who are you?"

"I'm young, yet I have a crazy combination of level and ability. I'm a damn fine kid magician."

"No, I'm not talking about that! There is this sword, and the infallibility you showed me that day... Are you perhaps a..."

However, she couldn't finish her words. Artpe could clearly see the black shackles around her neck. It was an absolute yoke that couldn't be broken if one was from the Demon race...

"...what I'm trying to say is..."

The shackles disappeared. It seemed she was successful in choosing her words.

"I have a bad feeling about this. It is as if I'll have to fight you one day. It feels inevitable."

“I’m much weaker than you right now. If you want to kill me, now is the time.”

“...eeek”

Artpe spoke jokingly, and it caused Etna to glare at him as if she really wanted to kill him. Artpe finally smirked as he continued to speak.

“We aren’t going to fight right now, so why worry about it? If we do fight later on, we can worry about it when we reach that point.”

“I envy you. You are able to speak such words with ease. You always seemed like an old soul, yet you are acting your age right now.”

“I am a kid”

“...yes, you are a kid. How the hell did I...”

After Etna finished her words, she let out a big sigh.

However, when she raised her head again, her expression became a bit brighter.

“All right. I give up. I’ll do as you’ve suggested. It would be foolish for me to worry about it. I’m living a life where I have no idea what I will do next.”

“Are you feeling a little bit better?”

“I’m not fine, but I decided to act as if it is fine. That is my specialty. Hoo-hoo.”

Her words made light of the situation, but from the perspective of someone hearing her words, he could tell that wasn’t the case. However, her attitude changed before Artpe could react and say anything. She acted as if the prior conversation had never happened.

“Hoo-hoo...”

Her body became a little bit less tense, and her eyes narrowed slightly in a mischievous manner. She acted as if this was a normal interaction between a man and a woman. She asked him a question.

“So who is your girlfriend amongst the three of them?”

How come every single woman Artpe knew decided to use this question as an introduction? Artpe lamented as he opened his mouth.

“She’s the most pretty one.”

Of course, he didn’t have a girlfriend amongst the three of them. Even if his lie was revealed, he decided to pick lies that would put a broad smile on Etna’s face. When Etna heard his answer, she let out a sigh as she replied.

“I’m glad you didn’t answer by saying all three of them were your girlfriends.”

“What if I had given that answer?”

“I won’t stand for a playboy, who makes many women cry. That is why I would have put you in a situation where you would be able to make only one woman cry.”

Artpe got ready to run away as he spoke.

“I’m sorry, but could you translate it into words that I can understand?”

“I would have immediately kidnapped you, and I would have bounced from this place.”

“You stay there. Don’t come this way.”

“It’s a joke. I’m joking.”

She was sitting at the edge of the bed. She patted the spot next to her. Artpe’s own safety had been threatened, so he was very hesitant. However, in the end, he did as she wanted.

Their bodies weren’t touching, but the two of them were close enough that they were able to feel the faint traces of each other’s body temperature. Artpe weirdly felt ticklish, so he tried to widen the distance from her. Etna kept looking at him with soft eyes, so he had to give up on that idea.

“Is that your cat? She is incredibly well behaved.”

“She’s my familiar.”

[Nyaa-ooh.]

It seemed Roa picked up on the mood, so she was well-behaved. No, she might be too afraid of Etna at an instinctual level. Etna extended her hand, yet Roa didn't even think about running away. She offered her body up to Etna. Roa was completely in a nonresistance mode.

Etna also realized this fact, so she let out a bitter laugh.

"...it has also been like this. Animals have always been sensitive to my energy. It has always been like this."

"I'll bring her back after I raise her. She'll be strong enough that she won't be afraid of you."

"Oh my. Are you already requesting another date? I'm glad."

Etna carefully retracted the hand she had extended towards Roa. This time she gently took Artpe's hand. Her hand was slender and delicate. Her hand felt hot as she grabbed his hand in its entirety.

When Artpe tilted his head in puzzlement, Etna pouted as she spoke.

"You said you wanted to hold my hand."

"Ah. I cooked up those words, because I wanted your magical energy."

"Ooh-doo-doohk."

The same sound that was coming out of Etna's mouth was heard from the joints of Arte's hand. Etna ignored Artpe's scream as she kept holding onto his hand. After a long while, she finally let go of his hand. His hand was red.

"You are young, yet you are trying to play with a woman."

"Are you saying it would have been fine if I was older?"

"Yes... so please grow up fast..."

"...huh?"

What the hell? Didn't he say something similar to someone? Artpe felt himself sink

into an odd mood.

Before he could dredge up the answer from his memories, Etna extended her hands to grab his shoulders. She gently pulled him towards her, and she gave him a light kiss on his cheek. Her kiss felt blissful hot befitting the daughter of the Phoenix.

“Uh...”

“Hoo-hooht.”

At the unexpected sneak attack, Artpe became dazed. Etna let out a bright smile as she stood up. There was a mischievous smile on her lips.

“When you grow up and if we don’t need to fight each other at taht time, let’s meet up once again in earnest.”

“Didn’t I tell you that I have a girlfriend?”

“Hoo.”

Artpe used the invincible shield to protect himself, but his defense broke into tiny pieces. Etna snorted.

“You really think I can’t tell that you were telling me a lie? You are great at hiding everything else. I don’t know why you are so obtuse regarding this subject.”

“Uh...”

...it was weird. Everyone seemed to be able to read his inner thoughts today. He wondered if a magic that revealed his inner thoughts was placed on him. He explored his face with his hand. Etna let out a cloudless laughter when she saw this.

“I want to stay with you longer, but my time limit is approaching. I have to go now.”

“Etna?”

“Also, this is my present to you.”

Etna pushed the sword towards him. He didn’t even have to check it. It was the Netherworld Flame Sword of Madness he had given her when he entered the room.

Artpe received the sword, and he looked over its information. The Fire Spirit Meltia wasn't residing within it, but a powerful fire energy remained within the sword. Artpe immediately realized that it was Etna's power.

It was absolutely inferior compared to the sword that had Meltia residing within it. However, the Record left behind by Meltia remained inside the sword, and it worked harmoniously with Etna's power. It had turned into an Artifact that was priceless.

"I'm not as good as you, but I'm skilled at enchanting items with my power. Please take care of this sword. You should think of it as me. Ah, you can't give it to that girl. I'll really hate you if you do."

How the heck did she know that he had been planning on giving to Maetel... He was having such thoughts, yet he shamelessly shook his head from side to side on the outside.

"No, I was going to use it. Don't worry about it."

"Hoo-hooh. It sound like a lie, but I'll trust you. Be seeing you."

In the next moment, Etna really disappeared from the spot. She completely disappeared using the same method she used in the pub couple days ago. However, she had traveled a much vaster distance compared to before. She controlled fire, yet she travelled quickly like the wind.

[Nyaa.]

At that moment, Roa was barely able to regain her composure. She hopped on top of Artpe's lap. She looked up at him as she cried. Her eyes were filled worry and fear.

[Nyaa-ahhhh...]

"No, she isn't a woman that would be swayed by her affections. If a day comes where she has to kill me, she won't hesitate to kill me."

[Nyaa nyaa, nyaa-ooh-ahh.]

"Yes, if that happens, she'll probably be hurt more than me. That is why..."

Artpe thought about the lonely expression on her face, and the black shackles that

encircled her neck. She was supposed to be a radiant fire that should be freer than anyone else. She wasn't able to spread her wings. When he thought about her miserable state, it made him grind his teeth.

Still, he was able to confirm something once again today. He was sure of it now.

In the past, the Demon king's power had felt absolute to him, but he was no longer afraid of it now.

"I'll end him with my own power this time around. Are you going to help me, Roa?"

[Nyaal!]

Roa gave a short yet fierce answer. Artpe smirked as he petted her head. Then he stood up. He equipped the flame sword given to him by Etna, and he hid it using his robe. Then he bravely headed outside.

"I'll take care of my remaining tasks."

After bartering with Mycenae, he was able to flawlessly rebuild the 1st barrier wall. It was already late into the night when he returned to the inn.

It seemed Sherryl and Sienna had already become friends. They slept as they leaned against each other's shoulder. Unlike them, Maetel was glowering as she waited for him. She wasn't up for anything important.

"What do you have to say for yourself, Artpe?"

"You might not believe me, but nothing happened. I had other tasks I had to finish."

"I want to hear a detailed account of what you did. Come here."

"Yes, ma'am."

He wanted to go to sleep. The night was fast coming to an end. It took him 30 minutes to convince Maetel that nothing had gone on between Etna and him. After being harassed by her, he was finally able to go to sleep within her embrace.

From Maetel's perspective, she was trying to make up for the time and affection she had lost to Etna. This was nothing but a form of punishment from Artpe's perspective.

Still, it was strange. He was able to sleep really well that night within her embrace. He slept for three hours. He had been busy running around Frate, yet all the fatigue he had accumulated was completely washed away as if it had been a lie.

Chapter 71

Underwater (1)

“Mmm... Ah.”

When he opened his eyes, he was faced with Maetel’s smooth and dazzling white neck. He tried to twist away from her, but Maetel had imprisoned him with her two arms. His attempt was met without much success. It wasn’t as if she had learned ground technique from someone, yet she had a perfect hold on him. He was once again surprised by her talent.

“How the heck did I sleep like this... No way. I’m sleepy again.”

Artpe couldn’t escape, but it didn’t feel tortuous or suffocating. The softest parts of her body was enclosed around him. It was such a perfect hug that he wondered if she had researched it.

‘It’ll be bad if I sleep too deeply... Ah, great. The sun is up.’

It was slightly tortuous, yet it also felt good. He was stuck in a strange imprisonment. He was barely able to raise his head to check outside the window. The world was still dominated by darkness. It was possible that he had slept for a whole day, but that was unlikely. If he really slept for a whole day, he couldn’t do anything about it.

“Wake up, Maetel.”

“Mmm, Artpe...? Eh-hee.”

When Maetel’s eyes were half-open, she checked Artpe’s face then she let out a bright laughter. It seemed she had been worried throughout the night that he would leave with Etna.

“Artpehhhh~”

“Stop acting like a baby and get up, you dolt.”

Maetel continued to cling to him, so Artpe flicked her forehead. He was able to safely extract himself from the tortuous yet blissful imprisonment. It seemed Maetel was no longer angry. She looked to be enjoying herself even if she was hit by Artpe.

“You guys should get up too. We have a lot to do in the morning.”

“Oppa...?”

[M... master. I should have waited up for you. I apologize for falling asleep.]

[You don't have to apologize for that.]

Artpe watched his party members rub sleep out of their eyes. He sat them side by side then he emptied his Dimensional Pouch. Over 100 Skill Books and Spell Books fell out.

“What is all of this, Artpe!?”

“What do you mean what is all of this? These are Skills and Spells we'll learn. I acquired it after I sold the corpse of the Kraken.”

He had used about 50% of the Kraken's body in creating the barrier wall, but it still meant he had a lot of parts left to sell. The Kraken's body had been very large, and he had claimed most of it. He set aside a portion that his party might need in the future, and he had sold a significant amount of Kraken parts.

Krakens rarely appeared in this world, yet one could always find buyers that needed ingredients from a Kraken. At that moment, Mycenae was trying to sell her share of the Kraken's corpse, so the entire Anywhere company was working on this task. This was why Artpe was able to sell it so easily.

Of course, Skill Books and Spell Books were hard to acquire even if one had money. However, Mycenae was his personal merchant, and she played a big role in the extermination of the Kraken. This was why she was able to acquire her level 200 high rank Class as a merchant, and the items she could acquire increased precipitously.

Artpe wasn't someone that would squander such an opportunity. He was successful in acquiring a large amount of Skill and Spell Books. He chose to receive these items instead of money for the Kraken by-products.

Since he had charged past level 200, he had the prerequisite needed to learn area of

effect magic(AOE) spells, yet he couldn't purchase any from the Anywhere company. They weren't carrying any, and this was the only part of this venture he found wanting.

"I've purchased a total of 159 Skill Books and Spell Books. I have about 20,000 gold left, but the gold will probably used to buy Skill Books and Spell Books at a later date."

"Artpe, are you sure you weren't meant to be a merchant instead of a hero...?"

He might have given Mycenaе a bigger cut, so he could sell his portion more easily. It was a high level tactic where he gave benefits to his opponent, so he could smoothly take what he wants.

"There's too many!"

"Most of the skills that has nothing to do with the Warrior Priestess is all yours, so you should learn all of them."

Maetel was in shock, so she picked and learned a Skill Book at random. There was a profound and mysterious expression on her face.

"Blacksmith's Efficient Blade Sharpening... Why would my power grow from learning this, Artpe?"

"If you want to use the Efficient Blade Sharpening skill, it requires an exquisite amount of physical strength."

"The world of Skills is very mysterious..."

"Wow. There are an incredible amount of Skills I can learn, oppa!"

"Ajumma's authority to acquire items was broadened. We now have direct access to the corrupted parts of the temple!"

"There are really too many bad people in this world!"

However, Sienna was able to become stronger thanks to these bad people. It was a very ironic situation.

"This one and this one... Wow. Battle Priestesses use these types of Skills!"

“You’ll gain more in the future.”

“Ooooh. My body feels nauseous when I try to learn them one after another.”

Artpe smirked when he saw Maetel and Sienna quickly pick up and learn the Skill and Spell Books. He also started to learn the Spell Books. This was a bizarre sight that could only be seen with a hero’s party. Sherryl looked on in a dumbfounded manner.

“You learned the Carpentry skill, so how will that skill make you stronger? I I really don’t understand it, Artpe.”

“I also don’t know how it’ll be of help. However, I think i’ll aid me in my life as a dairy farmer.”

They quickly learned the Skills and Spells. It took 30 minutes for the hero’s party to clear the last of books that started out as a pile of books.

He had basically converted the Kraken’s body parts into Skill and Spell books. This was why both Artpe and Maetel was able to increase their Status to level 50 in one sitting. They were slowly reaching a point where they had learned every single Skill and Spell they could learn at their level.

On the other hand, Sienna wasn’t a hero, so there was a limit to which Skills she could learn. Even if one took that into consideration, he had purchased a massive quantity of Skill Books for a Warrior Priestess, and common spells that were shared with Priests. Her already monstrous Status had gone through a significant increase.

The defeat of the Kraken was also accepted as an Achievement, so she was able to advance to a level 200 high rank Class using the Crystal Ball of Blessing. Her abilities reached a whole different dimension compared to what she was before the fight with the Kraken.

“Oppa, are we going to leave immediately?”

“We have one thing left to do. It is time to see the most important loots.”

[Nyaaaaaa.]

Roa sensed that it was her turn, so she let out a very tired cry. However, Artpe was merciless. He picked her up by the scruff.

“I won’t drag this out. Spit out everything you acquired from the Kraken.”

[Nyaa! Nyaa-ah? Nyaa-ah-ah-ah!]

“You can’t.”

[Nyaa-oooh...]

‘I like having numerous small items, but I also like big items! I want one for myself!’

Artpe coldly turned down Roa’s request.

Roa sulked as she opened her mouth. Exactly four items fell out of her mouth. The amount of loot from the enormous Kraken was small, but this meant each one of them were incredibly valuable.

“The first one is the bastard’s Magic Stone. If it is possible, I’ll use it later as an ingredient for Reinforcement.”

A level 267 Boss Monster Magic Stone was hard to come by. When the Magic Stone emitting a bright blue light appeared, he immediately placed it within his Dimensional Pouch.

The remaining items were metallic boots with the coloring of the ocean. The gauntlets were also letting out a similar luster... Then there was the Spell Book that was covered with a dark water colored leather. The leather binding was letting out a serious amount of power. It was confirmation that the book contained a high level AOE magic.

“It finally came out.”

“I can feel an incredible amount of Mana from within... I’m getting dizzy just looking at it!”

He became more sure when he saw Maetel’s reaction. She became nauseous at just seeing the title of the high rank Spell Book. Artpe gave the boots and gauntlets to Maetel and Sienna. Then he picked up the Spell Book with an elated expression on his face.

In sequence, his face started to crumple.

“God Flush...”

“Artpe, what is it...?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

It was an AOE magic spell. It really was an AOE spell. The requirement for learning it was on the low side, and it was quite powerful. If he possessed the special requirements, he would be able to use it with relatively low Mana consumption. It was a mighty fine Great Magic, but...

“Why do you have such a sour expression on your face, Artpe?”

“Because...”

Artpe let out a sigh as he gave an explanation.

“It is a Flush type magic. It’s a legendary magic spell that had a big impact when the sewers of the Magic Kingdom of Aedia was being made... Moreover, I’ve never seen a prefix added to this type of magic.”

“Huh...?”

What did the magic spell have to do with the sewer system?

The party members didn’t know the origin story, so they tilted their heads in puzzlement. Artpe let out a vocal sigh, and he learned the God Flush.

In the entirety of Artpe’s past and current life, he had never seen this rare AOE magic. Just learning this single spell had increased his Magical Energy by 30. This fact actually made him feel more annoyed.

“Yes, if it was just strong, it would have been great. It is powerful, but...”

The boots took on the qualities of the Kraken, so it was possible to stick onto any surface. It was an incredible Artifact that allowed the wearer to move freely underwater and above water.

On the other hand, the gauntlets stored Mana, and it was able to imbue properties of a Kraken and its strength to a weapon being held by the gauntlets. The two Artifacts

went through three Reinforcement in the hands of Artpe. After they were changed into entirely new Artifacts, they were given to Maetel and Sienna.

“This is fun!”

“I think I’ve double in strength, oppa!”

“Yes, you did become twice as strong.”

They learned all the Skills and Spells. Moreover, the loots were distributed to the respective party members. If they met the Kraken from yesterday, they might be strong enough to face the Kraken in a direct confrontation.

Still, they needed to defeat the Kraken to have necessary power needed to defeat a Kraken in battle. It highlighted the absurdity of his life. It was akin to saying he needed to defeat the Demon King to be able to acquire a magic that will be able to inflict critical damage to the Demon King!

“I don’t think there is another Kraken in this ocean...”

“Artpe, I’m hungry.”

“The sun is about to come up, so we don’t have time to eat. You’ll just have to pray the Mermaid Kingdom has dinner that’s tastier than seaweed.”

If one considered the power of the party, it wouldn’t be a problem to cross into Aedia. In fact, it made one wonder if they could break into the Demon world. However, Artpe tried to be patient. There was a change from his past life to his current life. The Chef’s recipe had changed. It was more aggressive and bold.

After he removed all traces of his party, they immediately exited the inn. Of course, the Lunatic Wave was still ongoing, so each barrier wall was manned by soldiers. Still, if they couldn’t trick the soldiers, they had no rights to call themselves the hero’s party.

“Artpe, it feels as if you haven’t told us all the important facts.”

Maetel walked beside him as she firmly grasped his sleeve. It seemed she just had this thought. She tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked the question.

“We are going into the ocean?”

“That’s right.”

“How are we going to breathe?”

Artpe let out a refreshing laughter as he replied.

“That is a good question.”

“If you tell me that you don’t know the answer, I’ll hit you... with my lips. I’ll hit Artpe’s lips with my lips.”

“I’m sorry. It was a joke. I’ll tell you now, so stay there.”

Before he knew it, the number of threats she issued had increased. Artpe seriously mulled it over. He wondered if he had ruined Maetel. He had no choice, but to reveal the correct answer.

“There is a magic spell called Underwater Breathing. Its difficulty is unnecessarily high, but it allows one to breath underwater. However, the spell doesn’t help with one’s mobility within the water, so it doesn’t sell well. It is an ambiguous spell. I was able to buy it cheap thanks to this fact.”

“Magic is really incredible.”

“I can’t always rely only on my Mana Strings.”

It would have been great if he was able to acquire a more proper AOE magic!

[Master.]

Sherryl the mermaid walked clumsily as she continued to follow after them. She grabbed Artpe’s sleeve, and she spoke as if she was whispering her words.

[The Road of Mermaids will open soon.]

“All right. Let’s go.”

Artpe led his party past the 3rd barrier wall, and they arrived at the 2nd barrier wall. The monsters were unable to get past the 1st barrier wall, which Artpe had reconstructed during the night. The city guards were split between the 1st and 2nd

barrier wall.

The ones stationed on the 2nd barrier wall were all sleeping. The ones on the 1st barrier wall were quite loud as they moved around.

“Everyone be alert on your patrol! The Mermen might try to crawl over this wall at any moment!”

“Sir, it is strange. We haven’t seen any mermaids for awhile. Moreover, the other monsters are fearful of making contact with the wall. They are staying back...”

“The magician-nim is really amazing. He rebuilt the barrier wall yesterday.”

“I told you not to relax, you useless bastards!”

The party was moving carefully to avoid being seen by the knights. Naturally, they were able to see the 1st barrier wall, which Artpe had finished building in the night. It looked much sturdier than the 2nd barrier wall. It was impossible not to look at it.

The metallic barrier wall was letting out a subdued red light. No one knew why the barrier wall was metallic even though no metals were used in creating the wall. Fortunately, the water didn’t cause the wall to rust.

“That’s the new wall made by Artpe.”

“It’s incredible, oppa. It looks incredibly sturdy.”

“Of course, it is. It better be if you consider the materials that went into it.”

It was true that the Hellfire Sentinel was completely destroyed in the fight against the Kraken. However, the wreckage containing the boiling magical energy was left behind. While Artpe blocked the swarming monsters, he retrieved the fragments. Then he combined it with the ingredients gathered from the Kraken’s body to make a new 1st tier barrier wall. He then used three consecutive Reinforcements. The barrier wall was inferior to the Hellfire Sentinel, but it was incomparably sturdier than the original 1st tier barrier wall.

The lord of Frate was present during the construction process, and he was touched by Artpe’s work. He suggest they name the wall after Artpe, but Artpe rejected the idea with a single stroke.

“So we’ll cross the 1st barrier wall, and we’ll immediately enter the ocean?”

“Even if we put aside the monsters for now, we’ll never avoid the gazes of the people. That is why we’ll enter from here.”

“From here...?”

Originally, the port was placed between the 1st and 2nd tier barrier wall. It had also been the location where the ships of the foreign nobles and merchants had been anchored. Of course, there were no traces of these ships left behind. The port was destroyed by the attacks from the Kraken, other monsters and Artpe’s magic. It was just filled with water from the ocean now.

The monsters were unable to cross the 1st tier barrier wall, so an atmosphere akin to what one saw at a peaceful lake was formed. However, the traces of battle were within this body of water. It was filled with countless blood and tears of monsters and humans.

“Then there are the merchants ships filled with shipment buried within this water. Loots will also be present. They are all untouched.”

“...Artpehh~”

“Even if you look at me with those eyes, you won’t be able to trouble my conscience. You should give up on it. I’m not stealing anything. I’m just excavating the treasures buried within the ocean!”

Artpe was in control of the finances of the hero’s party, so he was allowed to be shameless! Maetel looked as if she really wanted to argue with him, but she stopped herself. It seemed she had a rough idea on how much the Skill Books and Spell Books had cost him.

“I know Artpe isn’t always good. I know this, and I’m also bad for tolerating it.”

“I would go further than that. I’ll be blunt. I’m a bad guy. If that is all, let’s go!!”

Artpe casted the Underwater Breathing spell, and the party started walking. Of course, he didn’t need to cast it on the mermaid Sherryl and the magic beast Roa. The fact that he was able to cast it simultaneously on three people was incredible. It was a waste of breathe to expound on how amazing it was.

“Maetel, you should throw a rock over there.”

“Yes.”

Maetel’s powerful throw created a enormous ripple on the surface of the ocean. As a side benefit, several monsters nearby died. It wasn’t even a Skill! She just threw a rock!

“...mmm? I heard something suspicious from over there!”

“Could it be another Kraken coming this way? What’s going on!”

The plan to create a distraction with Maetel had created a result that was a bit excessive. All the knights on top of the 1st and 2nd tier barrier wall were looking towards the ocean. In that moment, the party entered into the artificial lake. They were able to make a clean escape, and the hero’s party submerged into the ocean.

Chapter 72

Underwater (2)

“There really isn’t much that is worth salvaging.”

“Should you really be saying that, Artpe?”

Artpe grumbled with all his heart. Maetel couldn’t believe what he was saying, so she asked again. She was justified in doing so. The Dimensional Pouch had plenty of space even when he had put in the Kraken’s head. However, he had filled the Dimensional Pouch with the loot he had gained from the ocean.

“You should look at it this way. The truly important items were already put up for auction. If the ships contained items that were worth several hundred thousand golds, they would desperately be trying to recover it by now. It wouldn’t matter if the Lunatic Wave is going on or not.”

“Isn’t it, because they don’t have the ability to enter the ocean and retrieve their items?”

“Of course, there is that.”

Artpe’s words weren’t too far off from the truth. He was able to gain miscellaneous items from each ship. There were gold, gems and some small Artifacts. They were worth around 3,000 gold in total. It was enough to buy two pairs of underwear worn by the wife of Marquis R. No noble or merchant would risk their lives to recover such a pittance.

“There were a total of 50 ships, so I made around 160 thousand gold. Maetel, this is called the economic of scale.”

“Artpe is a really bad guy.”

Artpe did feel sorry for looting all the content of the ships, so he put the wreckage into a neat pile. It could be salvaged later if anyone wanted to recycle the materials. By the look of it, there was no way a human had done it. It was arranged in a natural manner,

yet he made it so that the monsters would have a hard time destroying it.

After he finished his work, he looked around his surrounding. Monsters were still unable to bypass the 1st barrier wall, and he had completely cleared all the ships. He also collected money and items from the dead monsters. Everything was perfect.

"All right. Let's go."

[In this place... I lost many compatriots. Many were merfolk from my kingdom.]

Sherryl spoke as she glared at him. Artpe had treated all the monsters including merfolks in terms of items and gold. It might have created a feeling of defiance within Sherryl. Artpe was careful not to allow water to enter into his Dimensional pouch. As he put away the pouch, he retorted in a light tone.

[Humans fight and kill even amongst each other. There is no way we would spare the Merfolk when they are the aggressors. If you want to argue with me on this point, you looked up the wrong address.]

[Not all humans try to kill each other. It is the same for the merfolk. We aren't all cut from the same cloth. This was especially true for the merfolk from the Anaid Kingdom until those men came...]

There was resentment within Sherryl's voice. When she pledged loyalty to Artpe, she hadn't said anything about what happened during the Lunatic Wave. It seemed when she was faced with the aftermath, her feelings had surged forward. It wasn't as if Artpe couldn't understand what she was going through, so he gave a somewhat suitable response.

[However, if you guys stayed within the deep sea, there would have been no reason for the humans to be hostile against the merfolk.]

[If master can truly drive out our enemies and withdraw the curse casted over kingdom... The merfolk of the Anaid Kingdom will never invade the human realm. The great flow of Mana that visits us once a year will not guide our actions.]

Basically, she was implying they were civilized enough to be free from the effects of the Lunatic Wave. When he heard those words, he remembered that the merfolk hadn't played an active role in any events from his past life. This was why he became a bit more interested in the merfolk.

'The merfolk built their own civilization, so why didn't we pay much attention to them... Ah, that right. There has never been a case where one of the merfolk was able to get past level 200 to gain a high rank Class.'

Their potential might be limited, or it might be an environmental factor. The actual reason was immaterial. They had never produced a powerful mermaid or merman that was able to leave their mark in history. Even if they had the advantage in number, over half the population were at a level where it made them useless. They were lousy monsters with levels in single figures. This was why humans and the Demon King's army hadn't paid any attention to them.

'...the elite Mermen fighting units that were enhanced with the Curse of Madness can't contend with the hero's party or the Demon King's army. However, they can be used as a sufficient threat against the humans. They couldn't be transported using the ocean road.'

In his past life, the Chef had focused more on cooking the hero's party instead of humanity. This was why the Demon King hadn't done anything like this in the past. As expected, one could tell a lot had changed from his current life just by looking at this single issue.

Yes, he had already decided to wipe out the rest of the Archduke's forces. It wouldn't be bad if he cleaned up all the issues in regards to the merfolk that was connected to the Archduke. Artpe always hated leaving behind loose ends. It was something that remained from his days as one of the Four Heavenly Kings.

[All right. Most of everything you wish will come true if you guide us properly.]

[I am master's servant. I'll do whatever master wants. I just follow master's order.]

At Artpe's response, Sherryl's face visibility brightened. She was trying to hide her emotions, so she worked hard to reply in a calm manner. He couldn't help but laugh at the sight.

Moreover, Maetel couldn't understand the words of the mermaid, yet she was glaring at them as she stood next to him. It was a bit scary.

"Oppa. If we want to use that road, don't we have to be on the other side of the 1st barrier wall? What are we going to do now? Do we have to destroy that wall?"

“I went through the effort of creating that barrier wall, so I won’t destroy it with my hands. We’ll tunnel below it, and we’ll be able to exit on the other side.”

Since he couldn’t bore through the barrier wall, he would make a temporary underwater tunnel to cross to the other side. It was such a simple plan that it made one wonder if such a plan was any different from making a hole in the wall.

While Artpe’s party members were taken aback by the news, Artpe took out two strands of Mana Strings. He intertwined the two strands, and he created a drill by rotating it. It was an exquisite use of Mana and magic, but in the end, the magic was...

“Artpe learned a lot of magic spells, yet in the end, you use the Mana Strings.”

“This is different.”

Artpe let out a smile of triumph, and he casted two more magic spells. The first was Hyper Rubbing. It was a magic that could increase friction to the extreme. The other one was called Haste. It increased speed.

It was almost impossible to combine magic spells. This was also true with combining the attributes of Skills. However, Mana String was a Unique spell. It had the ability to strengthen itself by adding the power of other Skills and Magic!

“Go, Mana String!”

“In the end, oppa can’t deny the fact that you always use Mana String and Hyper Rubbing as your main power...”

“That part of Artpe is too cute.”

Even if Artpe was being cute, the result created by his magic wasn’t cute at all. The Mana drill was created by combining three magic spells. The drill started to rotate, and when it impacted on the ground, it started making a hole. The speed was so fast that everyone looked on in disbelief.

“We’ll charge through like this! I know it is creating a cloud of dust, but you’ll just have to endure it!”

“Everyone outside will realize what is happening! Hurry! Go faster!”

[S... such a terrifying magic spell...!]

The two strands of Mana Strings violently rotated as they widened the hole then the tunnel started to lengthen. The members of the hero's party boldly ran through this tunnel.

When they reached a depth that couldn't be covered by the 1st barrier wall, the Mana Strings immediately changed direction as they continued forward. Artpe was truly meticulous. He collapsed the tunnel as soon as they passed it. He perfectly tied the loose ends.

"All right. As expected, it worked perfectly."

"We are already outside, oppa!"

[The tunnel is already perfectly repaired!]

If he wasn't a magician, others would mistake him for a professional excavator. No one would be able to tell that a hole had been drilled here!

[Kee-ahhhhhhhh!]

[H... humans! They appeared from within the earth!]

[We have to kill them!]

The monsters, who had been residing near the ocean floor, glared at Artpe's party when they came into view. Amongst them, there were merfolk that were from the Anaid Kingdom. It was undeniable. Moreover, the number was much higher than Sherryl had estimated.

[How can this be? There are so many of them...]

Sherryl's eyes widened when she saw them. She knew a conflict with her people would occur, but when she was faced with it, she realized the reality was crueler than she had imagined. This idea was represented for example in marriage or when one was giving birth.

[Can you not see me, people of the Anaid Kingdom! I am Anaid kingdom's princess! I am Sherryl!]

[Kill!]

[Kyahhhhhh!]

She readily presented herself in front of her vassals, yet their answer were spears and streams of water. Sherryl created a water spear, and she was able to block the attacks in time. Her face was filled with sadness and anger.

[How can this be... It isn't just the humans. They didn't even hesitate when attacking a mermaid.]

[Am I to assume that all the merfolk within your kingdom is in a similar state?]

[Before I was eaten by the Kraken, only 5% of the population was like this. However, a week had passed, so...]

[I don't care how many of them were turned. No, it might be easier for us if all of them were placed under the curse.]

Why was that? The ones that were suffering under the curse would hold absolute animosity towards the force that had placed the curse on them. Artpe would be saving the merfolk from now on, and he would be in their good graces for saving them. It would make it easier to swing them towards his purpose.

Moreover, even if there were countless powerful curses, he had a monster that could eat it all. He grinned as turned to ask Maetel a question.

“Maetel, the humans above have no idea what we are doing, right?”

“Yes, I listened to their conversations. There is a fierce debate going on as to what they should have for breakfast.”

Maetel's senses were incredible. She was at the floor of the ocean. Her senses were developed to a point where she could hear the conversations of humans talking outside the water. He believed it, since she said so.

Since it was morning, he leisurely thought about the buttered corn cob. It had been delicious. As he had such thoughts, he took out Roa from within his robe.

“Roa, you can eat all of their curses. The Quest has just begun.”

[Nya?]

'Really? I can really do as I like?'

Her purple eyes were twinkling as she checked once again with Artpe. He let out a bitter laugh as he nodded his head.

"Just don't kill them."

[Nya!]

Roa immediately shot forth inside the water. In the process, the black fog that had been maintaining the shape of the small black cat dispersed into the surrounding.

[Nyaaaaaaaaaaaang!]

Roa immediately absorbed the unclean energies from the broad domain! The merfolk of the Anaid Kingdom were spread amongst the countless monsters. Their eyes widened as they felt pain.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhk!]

[Koo-hoohk, hah-ahk!? W... where am I?]

After feeling the wretched pain, the merfolk of the Anaid Kingdom became sound of mind. It seemed the other monsters were sensitive to the change that had occurred. They turned to reveal their animosity towards the merfolk. Artpe used his Mana Strings to cut off the heads of these monsters.

"I didn't kill all you bastards, because I was scared of you guys. I just wanted to get on my way as soon as possible."

They couldn't even overcome the barrier he had erected. They had been listlessly moving around in front of the barrier, yet they dared to bare teeth towards him? Their foolishness was boundless.

Artpe stretched out his two hands, and he freely swung 10 Mana String. The ocean was being filled with the blood and corpse of the monsters. Sherryl had been in a stupor when she saw the mayhem created by Artpe and Roa. He gave a firm order toward Sherryl.

[You should retrieve the confused merfolk. You are the princess of the Anaid Kingdom. Can you do this?]

[They are being overwhelmed to this degree... My god.]

Sherryl once again realized that her master's abilities were much greater than what she had imagined. She had no idea if this would be a boon or a misfortune for her.

[What are you doing? Aren't you going?]

[I... I'm going!]

Sherryl had been in a stupor when faced with the might of her master. When she heard Artpe's words, she quickly slapped her own cheeks. Then she rushed towards the water filled with blood, corpses, black fog and confusion. She yelled out.

[Follow me, merfolk of the Anaid kingdom! My lord has come to save our kingdom!]

[P... princess!?!]

[Sherryl-nim! My god! She was eaten by the Kraken! The princess has come back from the dead! Our princess has returned!]

[Oh oh, princess-nim!]

It didn't take long for Artpe and Roa to kill all the monsters in the region. Moreover, Sherryl was successful in gathering all the merfolk of the Anaid kingdom, who had regained their sense, around her.

Even now the number of monsters influenced by the Lunatic Wave were increasing in number. However, Artpe decided to leave the rest to the humans. His party had grown several hundred fold, and they headed towards the Road of the Merfolk.

This was the moment when the legend started with the Anaid kingdom. They weren't of the merfolk. It was a legend made by humans from port city of Frate, and a single magical beast

Chapter 73

Underwater (3)

The Road of Mermaids were hidden deep within the ocean. It was something that normal monsters would have a hard time finding.

Of course, Merfolk infected by the curse congregated near the road, but the combined number of curses present wouldn't even be considered a meal for Roa. Roa did a forced cleansing, and the freed mermen joined their party as they entered into the road.

“Look over there, Artpe. Is this all made out of magic?”

“This is amazing. There really is a road within the ocean.”

When they entered the Road of Mermaids, the eyes of Maetel and Sienna turned round. In a good way, it felt as if they've been hit in the back of the head. They were filled with wonder.

First, the road was very large, and the demarcation between the road and the ocean was clear. Even if a normal sea monster was able to enter into the road, an environment had been created where these monsters wouldn't be able to do much within this road.

“Magic... Yes, this is our race specific magic. It is a contract that binds the whole race from the olden days. All mermen that makes use of this road has to fortify and maintain this road.”

Artpe knew about the Road of Mermaids, but this was the first time he had seen it. When faced with the real thing, he couldn't hide his surprise. Unlike his surprised party members, he could accurately assess what had been done to create road using his Read All Creation ability. This was why his surprise ran much deeper.

[Road of Mermaids]

[The mermen used their power over water to create a form of pocket dimension. All beings aside from the mermen will suffer reduction in power, and this loss of power

in turn strengthens the road.]

[The Anaid Kingdom's road is unlike the other merfolk kingdoms spread across this world. It boast a degree of standard that is unmatched by the other roads, master.]

Her master possessed amazing abilities, yet he had been surprised by the road. Sherryl felt tremendous pride at this sight. By the time they reached the road, about 1,000 merfolk had been freed from the curse, and they had joined Artpe's party. Sherryl's mind and body had reached an equilibrium by this point in time...

[You should be proud of it.]

[It is an honor, master.]

She couldn't hide the delight she felt at Artpe's praise as she answered him. Currently, she was in her human form. Basically, it meant the Road of Mermaids was a passageway with no water. They had used their mastery over water to separate this space from the ocean.

"By constructing it like this, you made sure the other underwater monsters couldn't make use of your road. This was well thought out."

"All mermen are able to breath through either their gills or their lungs..."

"Gills? Lungs?"

Sienna spoke in awe. Maetel, who heard her words, tilted her head in confusion. Sienna also grew up in a mountain village, so he had no idea why Maetel didn't know this information like Sienna. Artpe let out a quiet sigh, and he just stroked her head. Maetel's eyes narrowed in pleasure. When her eyes opened once again, she had completely forgotten about her question about the gills.

While the party admired the road, the mermen recovered their thoughts and strength. They started becoming argumentative with Sherryl.

[Princess, how dare you obey the orders of such a young human?]

[If it is princess, you easily possess the qualification to represent our kingdom. Yet you lower yourself to a mere human...]

[He will become the savior of our kingdom, so hold your tongue. He is above all of us even if we weigh our entire kingdom against him... you'll all realize this fact soon.]

[Koohk. If the princess says so...]

[I do not doubt princess' eyes. I'll trust and follow you.]

Artpe had been a bit worried. He wondered if the merfolk would rebel. However, Sherryl was able to take control of the situation.

Since she was the 37th princess, he had wondered if she had any real authority. It seemed her authority was stronger than he had expected. Somehow, he knew this would cause more complications later on, and the inside of his head became more complicated.

[Nyaah. Nyaahh.]

“...are you still hungry?”

[Nyaah.]

Roa kept tapping on Artpe's hand as she let out a cry. Until now, she had absorbed the curses within a thousand merfolk. However, when she felt more curse energy in the distance, she wanted to immediately dash out.

“Ah, all right. You can go on ahead and eat first.”

[Nyaaaaaaaa-ohhhhh!]

When Artpe gave his consent, she turned into fog as she raced down the road. The merfolk, who had their curses absorbed by her, shrank back. Artpe ignored them as he started walking.

“Shall we go too?”

[I will guide you... no, they'll probably search us out first.]

[No, that'll be impossible for them to do.]

Artpe's purple eyes flashed. Against the Kraken, he had been unable to gather all the

information at once, because the Kraken had been too large. That wasn't the case anymore.

[I'll be the one to find them first, and I'll kill them all.]

The ocean was deep and large. The road was long out of necessity. Thankfully, the road was being treated as a form of pocket dimension that was cut off from the outside world. Basically, one was able to travel at an overwhelming speed on the road compared to traveling outside. Artpe's party was able to sense the reality of this fact when they saw the landscape of the ocean change.

"Wow. A shark just passed by us, Artpe!"

"I'm glad you know what a shark is."

"I heard sharks are delicious."

"..."

"Artpehhhh~."

He couldn't stand Maetel's pleading eyes, so Artpe used his magic to catch the shark swimming outside of the road. He recovered it, and he placed the shark inside his Dimensional Pouch. Maetel was full of glee as she clung to Artpe's arm. Sherryl was next to him, and she was shocked by what he had done.

[You manifested your magic outside of the Road of Mermaids, and you were able to teleport an item outside to recover the shark...]

[I Reinforced my boots once more. That is why I can use Blink on small items under my possession. It isn't too big of a deal.]

The merfolk had created this pocket dimension, but Artpe was able to discern the structure of the pocket dimension using his Read All Creation ability. The act of manifesting magic outside the pocket dimension had been easy, and the recovery of the shark's corpse was easier than his prior task.

Maetel couldn't comprehend his explanation, so she covered her ears as her head started to spin.

The landscape wasn't the only thing that changed. As they traveled further down the road, they kept running into groups of dozen or several dozen merfolk. More merfolk kept joining their group.

[Koohk. What the hell were we doing...]

[Aht, princess! It's princess Sherryl!]

Roa had already sucked out all the curse. She had eaten the curses to its roots. The merfolk were in a state of confusion as they regained their sanity. However, Sherryl was able to calm them down. The process of the merfolk joining their group was smooth. They followed Sherryl.

[You are now in the 2nd battalion. Go join them.]

[Thanks to princess Sherryl we were able to regain our sanity. Princess is our only hope.]

[We will regain what is precious to us from the ruffians who invaded our kingdom. Hurry! Let us march!]

As they progressed further down the road, the probability of encountering merfolk increased.

Since they were deployed for the Lunatic wave, these merfolk were combat troops. Even if they were combat troops, it was rare to find mermen or mermaids over level 100. They couldn't even put up a decent fight before their curse was sucked out by Roa.

[You are in the 3rd battalion! And you will be in the 4th battalion!]

[How long has it been since we were all gathered in one place like this?]

[This isn't a good thing. The place we were supposed to defend with our life lies defenseless. If I try to think about what is going on inside our kingdom, a sigh automatically escapes my lips.]

[Do not worry. We march with our savior.]

[Savior... I wonder how skilled this so called Savior is... That's the question I want

answered.]

[The princess said to trust in him. That is enough for me to put my trust in him.]

If one heard their conversation, one would realize that they were no different from the residents of the human nations. They possessed intelligence, culture and structure on par with humans...

Would Maetel really be able to kill them on sight just because they were monsters?

Suddenly, Artpe was worried, so he turned to look at Maetel. However, she was smiling as she walked arm-in-arm with Artpe. Artpe decided not to worry about it right now.

“Yes, I think I’m expecting too much.”

“I think Artpe just had a discourteous thought about me.”

“You are the discourteous one. My worry for you is turning into a discourteous thoughts in real time.”

“Ah.”

When she heard his words, Maetel’s eyes shook severely. She stuck closer to Artpe than before, and there was a bright light in her eyes.

“Artpe, did you perhaps worry about me...?”

“...I’m curious. What do I have to do to be hated by you?”

“You should give up on such thoughts.”

“You are so assertive!?”

One thousand, one thousand two hundred, one thousand five hundred, two thousand... The number of purified mer-soldiers rose exponentially. There was so many of them filling the road that they had to march in single columns. The line was endless. Artpe started to get worried as he looked at them.

[They won’t starve to death?]

[If we have Mana and water, we can maintain our body's vital activities, master. Merfolk are capable of consuming food, but not everyone is allowed to do so, master. Food is only given as a method to replenish stamina and mana to the fighting force and the ruling class.]

Mmm. This part really made them seem like monsters. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he nodded his head. It wasn't as if they didn't have a sense of taste, but it seemed the lack of food didn't affect their ability to live. The rest of the monsters were like them. They only repeatedly killed humans and other living beings, because the act allowed them to acquire Mana and Records. It allowed them to grow. Moreover, it wasn't as if humans were free from these constraints either.

[Nyaa!? Nyaa-ah! Nyaa-ahhhhhhhh! Nyaa nyaa! Nyaa-nyaa-nyaa-ah!]

They were quickly marching down the road when they suddenly heard a cry. Roa's voice was loud. Everyone on the Road of Mermaids could hear the cry. It was akin to an exultant cry let out by a pirate captain when a treasure island was found.

[T... this sound... It is the sound of the magical beast!]

[P... princess! Get behind me! I'll protect you!]

[No, you don't have to be on your guard. You've already experienced it, so you should know this by now. The magical beast is under the control of my master.]

[He controls that horrific magical beast!?]

The trauma caused by Roa couldn't be washed away. All the merfolk backed away in shock. Artpe was the only one puzzled by what had just happened.

Why was she so happy? Roa was born recently, and the way she expressed her emotion was very simple. What could cause her to be so happy...

[Nyaa-ah! Nyaa-nyaa-nyaa-nyaa-nyaa-nyaa-ahhhhhhhh!]

"It seems she found the source of the curse."

"Artpe, I'm starting to get a little bit worried."

"It's all right. This is business as usual."

After 30 minutes, Roa came back with a bloated belly. She had an extremely satisfied expression on her face, and she promptly fell asleep in Artpe's arms. She had an extremely satisfied smile on her face, and she even talked in her sleep.

[Nyaa-ah-ah, Nyaa-ooh-ah...]

"You little rascal..."

She had fallen asleep before Artpe could tell her to rest. Was it a form of declaration saying she could no longer eat any more curse? He wondered if he should retrain her from the bottom up. However, if results were any indication, it seemed he wouldn't need to retrain her. The appalled voices that rang out in the distance was a proof of this.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhh! That was the Artifact bestowed to us by the Demon King!]

[What happened! Why did you blow up the entire laboratory, Demon!]

[You did this, human!]

"Artpe, they are too noisy."

"...yes. I somewhat expected this to happen, but..."

It seemed Roa had already consumed all forms of negative energy existing within the kingdom.

Chapter 74

Underwater (4)

After they had heard the screams and shouts that seemed to contain the world's anger, it didn't take them too long to arrive at the mermaid kingdom. They were able to arrive at Anaid without much complications. Of course, their army was quite large, so Artpe hadn't expected to stay hidden from their enemies in the first place.

When he decided to use the Road of Mermaids, his stealth had been broken. When he granted Sherryl's request of freeing the merfolk from their curses, the cat was out of the bag.

"Oh. I can see the entrance leading into the kingdom. It is connected directly to the road."

"The center of the Road of Mermaids is the mermaid kingdom. Of course, it is interconnected."

"Oppa, I see other humans there! Ah, I also see a being that isn't human...!"

The mermaid kingdom was protected by the magic that ruled over the road. In addition, there was another layer of dimensional magic that protected the kingdom. From outside, the mermaid kingdom looked like a miniature model placed within a crystal ball.

It really was a beautiful sight. However, if one looked closely within the kingdom, one would find out that its beauty didn't reflect reality. A flock of humans was causing a huge disturbance within the kingdom.

"I... it isn't there. It's gone! The artifact he provided for us is gone!"

"I'm sure the merfolk committed treason against us!"

"You stupid and dull humans! You couldn't even protect a single item, and now you are making such a fuss!"

There was a blonde-haired Demon woman amongst the humans. When he checked her information with his Read All Creation ability, he realized she was the Demon that had a direct hand in creating the mess within the Diaz kingdom. He realized she was Teana.

'Are all the Demons acting so boldly as her? Maybe, they are all working under their real name.'

When he heard that name for the first time, he had thought it sounded similar to Etna's name. He wondered in secret if Etna had switched up her name to work under a pseudonym. However, that idea was blown into smithereens when he met Etna in Frate. He had worried unnecessarily, because their names were constructed in a confusing manner. That sin alone made her deserving of death.

"Your highness, the merfolk army is flowing back towards us! The curse was dispelled!"

"There are humans amongst them... I remember getting a description of that bastard... Ooh-doo-doohk."

"Those bastards are the ones that interfered with our Demonification experiments. I'm sure of it!"

"Those insolent brats dare to boldly show up in front of me!"

There was no way one would be able to hide a large army that numbered in the three thousand. Before Artpe's party was able to enter into the kingdom, they were already in the crosshair of their enemies.

[Master, the knights protecting the man named Medelrud are all over level 150. They are veteran knights. Moreover, there is a scary Demon that uses a terrifyingly evil energy. A single wave of this woman's hand neutralized all the soldiers protecting the royal palace!]

[That sounds about right. She is over level 200.]

Now that they had reached the kingdom, it seemed fear sprouted anew within Sherryl. She grabbed the sleeve of Artpe's robe, and she took a slight step backwards. However, merfolk arrayed behind them were unafraid.

[Princess, we are all gathered in one place. The result will be different this time around!]

[We have to kill those ruffians. We have to take back our kingdom and ocean!]

[All troops get ready for battle! We will escort the princess to the palace! We will cut down anyone that interferes with us!]

[Ooh-ohhhhhhhh!]

They had gone crazy after having a curse placed on them not too long ago, yet it was as if they had completely forgotten about it. Each of them raised their weapons to show their resolve. It seemed Sherryl was very touched by this act. Courage returned to her eyes.

[E... everyone... All right. With all of you and my master by side, I will no longer be afraid!]

“Yes, yes. I’m glad you guys made some breakthroughs.”

Roa was the one that did everything! Sherryl had let go of his sleeve as she turned to look at the merfolk. Artpe just nodded his head as he leisurely took a step forward.

[However, if I let you guys charge forward, countless tears and blood will be shed. You guys should stay back. We will take care of them.]

At the same time, he made a declaration to the merfolk. Of course, the merfolk had a dumbfounded expression on their faces. It was as if Artpe had slapped their faces. Sherryl was taken aback, and she once again moved closer to Artpe.

[M... master? If we are to stand up to them...]

[You seem to have the wrong idea. I didn’t free all the Merfolk, so that I can use them in battle. I just did it, because you requested it... it is time for us to complete the Quest. There is no need for your participation.]

[W... what!? You insolent human...]

[Quiet! The one that saved us all was my master. Show him respect!]

They were at the cusp of battle where two large forces were about to clash, yet a single person stepped forward in an unperturbed manner. Of course, everyone's gaze would be focused on him. Maetel was also taken aback, so she grabbed Artpe.

"They've become very vigilant against us."

"Of course, they are vigilant. However, you should be aware of this, Maetel. You have to be confident that you are going to win even if your opponent is vigilant. If you aren't, you shouldn't attack them in the first place. You should only be vigilant if you don't know the identity of your opponent, or if you can't discern their number... You only become vigilant if you aren't confident in your own forces. I'm not like that."

Artpe's eyes were shining brightly. If a hidden Kraken made its appearance, it might be a different story. However, he had made a thorough assessment of the players present here.

"It doesn't matter if there are a lot of them. They can even use whatever Artifacts they have. They can't win against us. You know why? We caught a Kraken that we shouldn't have been able to kill in this lifetime, and we've become incredible strong. This happens quite often with the Demon King's army, so you should keep this in mind. Their plan misfires quite often."

"Y... yes!"

Matel quietened down as she accepted Artpe's convincing words. He smirked as he turned his gaze. He caught sight of the Demon and Sienna. Sienna was gripping the handle of the hammer that was strapped to her back.

"Sienna, you should prepare yourself."

"Yes."

There was no need for the entire hero's party to step forward. Artpe and Sienna would take care of this. The two of them would be enough. The Chef's recipe had been pretty tight. However, as a result, the food transformed into something more delicious compared to the previous life's hero!

Artpe looked defenseless as he conversed with his party members in front of his enemies. It seemed the Demon was extremely irritated by this display. In the end, the Demon named Teana attacked first. An evil energy shot forth!

“Death’s Baptism!”

“You dare?”

Artpe snorted as he faced the black fog created by her. It was a powerful magic that could only be used by a Demon over level 200, but...

“H... how can this be... Priest!? They told me you were a magician!”

Her magic was extinguished in vain. It couldn’t get past the semi-translucent barrier created in the air by Artpe. The barrier was one of the spells he had purchased in this venture. It was the temple priest’s spell called Holy Barrier.

Unfortunately, Sienna was walking down the road of the Warrior Priestess, so she couldn’t learn the high rank spell that was exclusive to the regular priest and priestess class. However, Artpe was a hero. He could willfully ignore such restrictions. He learned the spell.

“Sienna, it’s time!”

“Understood, oppa!”

Normally, when the flow of the battle was going poorly like this, the Demon was in charge of saying something ominous. The Demon would utter nonsensical words in such a way that would indicate that this wasn’t over. It was supposed to make the hero’s party feel leery. Artpe became annoyed when his opponents alluded to the fact that there was more to come in the future. He hated it! He just wanted to end the Quest here! Please!

“Hoohp!”

Sienna had been prepared to receive his firm instructions. She ran forward. It was as if she was shot out of a cannon. At first, everyone snorted at the sight, but in the next moment, their eyes widened in shock.

“Wait a moment, the energy emanating from that hammer... Can it be...”

“This doesn’t make any sense. She is too young. This is impossible. My eyes are playing tricks on me!”

“Ha-ahhhhhhhhp!”

There was a milky white energy coalesced around her hammer. It was the most iconic skill that could be learned by a person possessing the high rank Class of Warrior Priestess. It was the Divine Hammer! Sienna’s unique Mana was infused with the skill. A strange aura that was neither light or dark was formed. It was a gray translucent aura.

However, one thing was for sure. This energy was absolutely lethal against Demons.

“Y... you even have a high rank Class Warrior Priestess with you!? Yes, I see now! The only human that is capable of using a magician’s ability and a priest’s ability at the same time... Eeeeeek! Human, I have an urgent business I have to attend to, so I’ll be leaving now!”

When operating in the human world, Demons had to be aware of the possibility of running into a hero! This was why they had to learn several important lessons before they were able to leave for the human world.

One of the lessons was the Bluffing Skill. The Demon had to make it seem that there was a backup plan that the hero would have to worry about. It was a tactic used to disturb the heart of the hero. Secondly, one had to promise the hero that they would meet once again in the future. It would put burden on the hero’s heart. It was called the ‘I’ll leave for now’ skill.

“You are surely a hero! I’ll leave for now, but now that I know your identity, you are finished! Soon, there will come a day where you will bow down to the Demon King!”

[Who’s gonna bow down to whom? I’ve done that so much that I’m fed up with it, you damned bitch!]

[D... Demon language!? Who the hell are you!]

After he was reincarnated as a hero, Artpe had put in tremendous effort to build up the foundation of two skills. Fortunately, luck had been with him, and he was able to perfect the two Skills. It was time for these abilities to shine!

“Mana String!”

“In the end, you used that spell again!?”

“Koohk!?”

Several strands of Mana Strings flashed forward. They streaked past Sienna to reach the Demon.

“Teleporta... What the hell! I’ll use the Artifact... This one too!?”

The Demon had prepared for the worst case scenario. She was able to cast her own Teleportation spell, and she possessed the Emergency Blink Artifact. This item was supposed to used to escape a crisis. Unfortunately for her, Artpe’s Mana String disturbed magical energy on top of interfering with the physical world.

The magical energy she emitted was tied up, so she couldn’t activate her spell. Moreover, he used his Read All Creation ability to identify all her Artifacts. He either snatched or destroyed all her Artifacts! This was only possible using Mana Strings where magical energy and laws of nature was combined.

“Of course, it would be much easier to use a Mana Restriction spell. It can bind a target’s Mana for a limited amount of time. Shit!”

“You always complain, but you are able to accomplish everything using your Mana Strings. Artpe is too cool!”

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhk! Hero! What the hell did you do to me!”

She had tried to teleport, but it was completely blocked off by Artpe’s Mana Strings. Moreover, the Mana Strings was wrapped around her. She glared at him as she tried to manifest a different attack spell. However, before she could do anything, Sienna reached the Demon. She brought down her hammer.

“Ha!”

After a short shout, a bold strike impacted on the Demon. The shock wave created sent Madelrud and all the humans nearby tumbling backwards.

“Koohk, ggooeehhhhhhk!”

So how would the Demon feel after taking a direct hit? At Sienna’s single strike, her shoulder and arm was completely crushed. Her Mana had been disrupted before she could manifest it, and it ran rampant in her body. She squealed like a stuck pig, and

she completely let go of her consciousness.

"H... how can this be..."

"We couldn't even lay a finger on that Demon, yet he easily..."

Until now, the merfolk had been repressed by the Demon and the ex-Archduke Medelrud, so they were surprised by what had happened. However, the one to feel the most surprised was Medelrud, who had been in league with the Demon.

"H... how... How can he easily subdue the Demon...!?"

When Medelrud was the Archduke, the Demon had come to him as an emissary of the Demon King. She had always remained above everyone as an overwhelmingly powerful being. At times, she revealed to him pieces of knowledge about black magic and curse rituals. When he saw the strange ancestral magic, he had completely given up on resisting or manipulating her.

So who the hell were these people! This boy taunted the Demon with a very playful tone! He also neutralized her as if she was toying with her!

"Eh-eet. One more time...!"

"...wait a moment, Sienna. Don't end her. Just bring her here."

"Yes. Understood!"

Sienna was about to end the Demon by bringing her hammer down once again. However, Artpe immediately stopped her from doing so. She took a wide swing with her sledge hammer to push back the group that was approaching her. Then she carried the unconscious Demon back to Artpe.

Medelrud and the other humans shrank back. They had seen what Sienna could do with a single strike. Since the Demon was the strongest amongst them, they didn't even budge an inch as they watched Sienna retrieve the Demon.

"Artpe, why did you spare the Demon?... is it because she's a woman?"

"What did I ever do to deserve suspicion every time like this... I'll tell you all about it later."

Artpe flicked Maetel's forehead as he gave his reply. Afterwards, his gaze headed towards the humans, who were shaking in fear.

"Let's talk about it after we end them."

This was obvious, but there were no other hidden bosses aside from the Demon amongst Medelrud's party.

It was the moment when the curtain closed on a Quest that had dragged on for a year.

Chapter 75

Underwater (5)

“I... I was merely used by the Demon named Teana.”

Medelrud’s face was crumpled. He was on his knees as he raised both his arms into the air. This was the first words spoken by him. Artpe nodded his head to indicate that Medelrud should keep talking.

“So?”

“In the beginning, her deal appealed to me. I wanted to become king. However, it was a trap. For the price of earning the Demon’s help, I had to carry out tasks for her, and each of them were horrifying. I regretted my decision right away. However, I couldn’t turn back...”

Artpe watched Medelrud’s miserable expression. He continued to speak in a remorseful manner. It seemed Medelrud was a pretty good actor. Artpe had such thoughts as he encouraged Medelrud to talk more.

“I was in such a situation when you guys showed up to ruin everything. The test, which we were conducting under the Demon’s instructions, failed. On top of that, I sent an army consisting of men absolutely loyal to me to bury you guys, yet they were wiped out.”

“At the time, I was truly dumbfounded by your actions. You really didn’t think about the aftermath. You are truly an idiot.”

“I didn’t think anyone was capable of stopping me. After the dirty experiments conducted by the Demon ended, I thought Diaz would fall into my hands. However, all my plans went up in smokes. No, I guess in a way it was an inevitability. Heroes always interfere with any work related to the Demon King’s army. Isn’t that right, hero!”

The Archdue Medelrud had been speaking calmly up until now. However, he shouted those words as he grinded his teeth. It seemed a sudden and unexpected feeling of resentment had surged forth at his own predicament. This was why Artpe mocked

Medelrud to his heart's content.

"If you knew a hero would show up, you are the retarded one for going through with the plan."

"I thought the heroes were already dead... You foolish brats ran away by spurning the protection of our kingdom. If you hadn't run away, things wouldn't have turned out like this!"

"Well, we became this strong thanks to not entering the palace..."

"...you guys are merely 12 year old brats that ran away after rejecting the protection of our kingdom... You guys did that to become stronger? You were able to have such thoughts at that age?"

Medelrud's expression turned blank at the unexpected answer. Artpe shrugged his shoulders.

"You should continue with your story. So what? When you were barely able to escape Diaz, was the Demon with you?"

"Kooh! I was somehow able to preserve my remaining forces... I planned on gaining a foothold in another country. However, at that moment, the witch enticed once again."

"Enticed?"

Artpe stopped speaking. He had a good idea what had transpired, so he no longer had to hear what Medelrud had to say. There was no way Medelrud could have been ignorant of what had gone on around him. Artpe just had to look at the state of Anaid to confirm this fact.

"Did you perhaps think about conquering the mermaid kingdom of Anaid to use the merfolk as your soldiers? Let me take it a step further. Did you plan on using them to re-conquer Diaz? I bet you wanted to retake the royal palace."

"..."

It seemed Artpe had hit the nail on the head, so Medelrud remained silent. Artpe was baffled by this.

What the hell did he say before? He was only used by Teana? There was no way that was true. He had known what he was getting into from the start. The Demon and Medelrud had known each other's intentions from the start, and they had been in a mutually beneficial relationship!

"So tell me again. Who's taking advantage of whom?"

"She lied to me! I never knew the curse would work like that!"

No, Artpe really didn't need to hear more of what Medelrud had to say. Artpe was so disgusted that he waved his hand. Mana String emanated from the tip of his fingers, and it cleanly severed the head of the former Archduke Medelrud. The bastard kept spouting disgusting excuses, and now he would be silent for eternity.

Medelrud had once been at the top of a nation, yet his end was ignominious. However, if one considered the weight of what he had done here, he had met a peaceful end.

"H... his lordship!"

"How dare you do that to our lord..."

"If he is so precious to you, you should go serve him in hell."

"Koo-hahk!?"

If he faced them any longer, he thought he would lose all the faith in humanity he had gained from conversing with the lord of Frate. This was why Artpe severed their heads in one fell swoop.

By the sound of it, it would probably have been better if he hadn't heard what they had to say. These men had cooperated with the Demon King's army. They weren't worthy of being heard!

[He was able to easily kill those powerful men!]

[Amazing. We couldn't even put up a fight against them, yet he killed all of them with a single wave of his hand...]

The merfolk shrank back when Artpe's abilities were verified with their eyes. However, Artpe hadn't been explicitly trying to show off his power. He snorted as he

retracted his hand, and he burned the corpses.

The kingdom of the merfolk was similar to the road. There were places that were filled with air, and there were places that were filled with water. Moreover, the Road of Mermaids was connected to the entrance of the kingdom, so of course, this space was isolated from the ocean. This was why it was possible to use fire magic here.

"All right. This eliminates the possibility of them coming back as Undeads to haunt us later on."

"So that is what you were worried about, Artpe..."

Just the mention of the Archduke Medelrud gave Artpe the hives.

Artpe had done his best to leave no loose ends behind! He didn't turn back around until he meticulous searched for the remnants of Medelrud's forces. He made sure there wasn't any traces of them left behind. Now it was time for him to take care of the business in regards to the Demon...

[Master.]

He was about to continue his work when he was interrupted. Of course, it was Sherryl. She was like a dog waiting for an order from her master. He couldn't ignore her, so Artpe gave her instructions first.

[All the evil energy within the kingdom was eliminated, so you guys take care of the rest. Our Quest is completely over now. There is no reason why it'll affect you guys any more.]

[I... I understand, master.]

Sherryl had been very nervous. She had thought they would have to face off against the combined might of the Demon and the humans. However, everything ended quickly thanks to Artpe and Sienna. She was a little bit dazed, but she was able to quickly assess the situation. She quickly gave orders to the merfolk.

[Go to the test site, 1st battalion! The Curse is gone, but I'm sure there are still a lot of merfolk imprisoned there! The 2nd battalion shall act as the emergency security force. I want you to make sure the civilians within the kingdom are safe!... I also want the 3rd and 4th battalion to join them! Go before it is too late!]

[Understood, princess!]

[We will follow your orders!]

Mmm. As expected, her dominion over the merfolk was too absolute when one considered the fact that she was the 37th princess. Artpe slowly started question what happened to the other 36 princes and princesses. The king of the merfolk had ruled this land before the invasion of the humans. Artpe wondered what had happened to him.

[They are all dead.]

After she instructed her underlings, she had returned to Artpe. Sherryl's answer to his question was truly shocking.

[What did you just say?]

[They were fed to the Kraken. The royal family possessed the most Mana and high rank potential... Medelrud and his group wanted to cast the Demonification curse on the Kraken, who was already suffering under the curse of madness. They were all fed to the Kraken.]

Even if he didn't hear about it, it was obvious as to what had happened afterwards. Still, he felt the need to ask the question. He asked with a bitter expression on his face.

[So you are the last scion? You possessed the most potential, so you were the medium they were going to tie the curse together in the Kraken?]

[...I guess that is one way to look at it. The humans wanted complete dominion over the kingdom, so they weren't going to leave behind any variables like the royal family. Even if we weren't sacrificed in the experiment, they would have used some other method to get rid of the royal family...]

Since the 37th princess Sherryl would tie the curse together within the Kraken, she was spared for couple more days, and she was safely rescued by Artpe before she died. When the merfolk were freed from the curse, they were relieved that a member of the royal family had survived, and they were following her...

Even if there was a preposterous human standing behind her, they had no choice but to follow her.

'I should have known it would turn out like this.'

Since she was the 37th princess, he had thought there was no way she would have a path to the throne. Artpe was foolish for having such thoughts. Who cares if she was low on the totem pole in succeeding the throne? If everyone was dead, her turn would come! Somehow, Artpe knew what she was going to say next.

[That is why... Master.]

As if to drive home his worry, Sherryl's eyebrows shook, and she lowered her head.

[When we recovered the kingdom, I became the representative of our kingdom. The kingdom will belong to master. This is something I should tell you after I ascend to the throne. However, I thought it would be better if you knew this beforehand...]

Artpe was a human that had saved her life. At the same time, he had easily returned the kingdom to her care. It was something the merfolk had considered to be an impossible task. Of course, this was the natural progression of the events.

If he thought about it, it was truly ironic. Medelrud had been chased out of Diaz, and he pulled off all kinds of shenanigans with the Demon to gain possession of the mermaid kingdom. Artpe gained what they had wanted by defeating them!

[You just regained your kingdom, yet you are giving it all to me. Are you sure you are fine with this?]

Artpe let out a sigh as he asked the question. However, Sherryl answered back with an unwavering voice.

[We are determined to see this through. Master, you killed the evil men, who tried to dominate our kingdom through force and fear. You also released us from the curse. The merfolk must repay our debt. Even if you weren't my master, you would have become the ruler of our kingdom in the end.]

Her words were flowing out naturally like water, but it wasn't as if Sherryl looked completely thrilled about it. How could she enjoy handing over her kingdom to a human? Still, it was much better than being ruled by Medelrud. This fact gave her comfort.

Artpe was flabbergasted, so he asked her a question.

[Who the hell taught you to repay a debt no matter what?]

[It is an instinct for the merfolk. We had to find a way to survive in this harsh ocean, and it is an ancestral wisdom that was ingrained within our body.]

[Let us say you trust this wisdom, and you follow me until the end. What if I suddenly lose my mind someday? What if I ruin the kingdom like Medelrud?]

At that moment, the light in Sherryl's eyes shook. However, she immediately fixed her expression before answering him.

[Master won't do such a thing.]

[You became a little bit worried by my words.]

[...that is true.]

[How the hell is that wisdom? You are just being idiotically stubborn!]

[But...]

When Sherryl looked at him with a worried expression, Artpe let out a laugh once again. Before Medelrud invaded the kingdom, the merfolk had never had any meaningful interactions with the humans. This was why Sherryl was still unable to judge the humans. This was why this single phrase from Artpe worried her.

He thought her innocence was very cute. He didn't show any outward signs of what he was thinking, yet Maetel was like a wraith as she moved in to pinch his cheek. He was terrified of Maetel, so he quickly erased such thoughts. He gave Sherryl instructions.

[Do you remember the reason why I entered the Road of Mermaids?]

[I do. Master wanted to use it to go to Aedia.]

[That's right. From the beginning, I only wanted one thing from you. I don't need you, and I don't want your kingdom. I'm fine with you just guiding me to Aedia. You don't even have to follow me. It is sufficient to send a subordinate in your stead to guide us.]

[What...?]

The light within Sherryl's eyes shook. He wondered if she wanted him to explain it again, because she hadn't understood what he meant by his words. It seemed that wasn't the case.

[Master... Are you rejecting me?]

After a brief silence, Sherryl spoke. For some reason, her cheeks were puffed out. Artpe didn't know the reason behind her reaction, so he was baffled by it. He replied to her.

[No. It isn't as if I don't like you. However, I don't want to unnecessarily make trouble for you when you have to rule over Anaid from now on.]

[I've already solemnly promised everything that I am to you, master. So why are you trying to put a stain on my promise?]

[I'm not going to coerce you into doing anything you don't want to do. That is what I'm trying to say right now!]

[You don't have to take my feeling into account. I want to repay my debt as an honorable mermaid. I want to repay the favor to a worthy master!]

Mmmm. This was giving him a headache. He took back his previous thought that said merfolk possessed intelligence on par with the humans. These guys were idiots!

[Nyaa.]

“Huh?”

‘It isn't as if I don't like you, and I'm not saying you are annoying either. I'm not trying to insult you now. I just want to suggest the best path forward for you and your kingdom. I still have a whole life in front of me, and I can't be tied down by this kingdom.’

He was about to say this to Sherryl. However, Roa, who had been sleeping soundly after her feast, opened her eyes wide.

“You were sleeping well up until now, so what's up?”

[Nyaa, nyaa-nyaa-ah. Nyaa-ha-nyaa!]

After she squeezed out of Artpe's arms, Roa's butt started to wiggle by itself. This was obvious, but she only displayed such reaction when she detected a curse or an evil energy. She had already eaten all the evil energy within the kingdom, yet she was showing such a reaction. This was why it was impossible for him to comprehend what was going on.

[Nyaa nyaa nyaa nyaa nyaa? Nyaa nyaa-ah, nyaa-oooooh-nyaa.!]

Roa was willing and kind enough to explain it to her owner. Her butt and tail was wiggled back and forth as she did so. It was as if she was couldn't wait to dash out.

"An energy that hadn't been here before has suddenly shown up? You think it is as delicious as the curse within the Kraken?"

[Nyaaa!]

[Koo-goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

[R... run away...!]

[Goo-ahhhhhhk!]

When Roa gave a fierce nod in confirmation, a horrifying roar rang out at the same time as the scream of the merfolk. Sherryl's face turned pale when she heard the sound. She yelled out in alarm.

[M... my god... Our brief absence caused the ancient temple to show up!]

Artpe had a rough idea what her answer would be, but he couldn't help himself from asking the question.

[What is the ancient temple?]

[It is where the horrific beasts of the ocean was sealed. The Anaid kingdom exists to protect the seal! We diligently rotated guards to protect the seal. However, we weren't able to protect it for over a week, because we were invaded by the humans. In the end, the seal is...!]

[Yes. I see.]

He let out a benevolent smile at Sherryl's reply, and he nodded his head. However, he was cussing up a storm inside.

Of course, his Quest wouldn't end so easily! He should have anticipated this when he was able to easily take care of the Demon and the humans!

The hero's tough destiny had brought out something they shouldn't have encountered! Their destiny had called out even the ancient monsters!

Chapter 76

Underwater (6)

In his past life, the hero never went into the ocean. By the look of it, it didn't seem Maetel was scared of water, and she didn't seem particularly averse to the ocean.

However, the magician joined up with the hero's party after the war with the Demon race began. The hero's party wouldn't have been able to enter the ocean until the magician joined the party. Moreover, they didn't have the time to leisurely explore the ocean after the magician joined the party. This was the most rational explanation.

'Also, the Demon King's army hadn't paid attention to this place either... '

He never expected an ancient temple to exist within the ocean. When everyone became easygoing and inattentive after the death of the Demon King, this place would have suddenly been discovered, and it would have probably driven the world into fear once again. This place was set up like a hidden boss!

[Nyaa-ah, Nyaa-ah-ah-ah. Nyaa-ooh-ooh.]

"It isn't as strong as I'm making it out to be? All right. I'll trust in your words."

After he received Roa's opinion on this matter, Artpe immediately turned to look at this party. He gave them instructions.

"I want the two of you to go ahead of me, and I want you to stall them. I'll follow behind you soon with Roa."

[Nyaa!? Nyaa nyaa! Nyaa-nyaa-nyaa-nyaa-ah!]

"I'll be there soon, so hold tight."

"Yes, I understand!"

"You have to come as soon as possible, oppa!"

Matel and Sienna unhesitatingly nodded their heads, and they immediately ran forward. He didn't need to tell them where to go. After the seal was broken, the ancient temple was letting out a terrifying amount of energy. It was as if it was inviting outsiders to search it out.

[Master, are you going to help us!?]

[You should gather all the merfolk, and you guys should stay back. You guys don't have the power to block what is to come.]

[Master... I understand.]

Sherryl's expression was a 50/50 mixture of thankfulness and indignation. She nodded her head as she retreated towards the back. It was a good sign. She was able to assess and accept her own shortcomings. It was something truly difficult for one to do. If she could do this consistently, she would be worthy of ruling over the merfolk.

[Nyaa-ahhhhhh...]

"Just be a little bit more patient, Roa. This won't take long."

The reason why Artpe hadn't left with his party members was quite simple. He still had someone he had to attend to.

"Hey. Get up."

"Koohk!? Koo-oooooh-ahk!"

The Demon had fainted after taking a thorough beating from Sienna. Artpe violently woke her up. The Demon named Teana tried to attack Artpe as soon as she woke up. However, he had readied several dozen Mana Strings. She was immediately thrown to the ground.

"Ggoohk, ggo-o-roo-roohk!"

"If you tell me what I want, I'll spare you. This is a promise."

"Koo-ooh-hahk! Gooooooooohk!"

She couldn't move her body no matter how much she struggled. In the end, she

realized the only body part she could move freely was her mouth. She glared at him with cursed-filled eyes. She opened her mouth.

“Koohk. You are being magnanimous, because you are a hero? Ridiculous!”

“I’m just saying we should make a deal. For the price of guaranteeing your life, you should feel motivated to talk to me.”

“What...?”

She never expected such words to come out from a hero, so she had a dumbfounded expression on her face. Artpe didn’t give her the opportunity to think too much on it. He immediately asked her a question.

“Who’s giving you orders?”

“Why would you ask such a useless question? The answer is obvious. He is the Demon King, who possesses peerless nobility and magical energy...”

“Stop lying to me.”

He brushed aside Teana’s words. A truly crafty light flashed within his purple eyes.

There was nothing that could stay hidden in this world when faced with his eyes.

“You don’t have a collar around your neck.”

“Koohk!?”

When she heard his words, the Demon’s eyes widened. This was one of the two reasons why he had spared the Demon. She was a Demon that wasn’t under the fetters of the Absolute Control. It was as if time paused for a brief moment. Artpe continued to speak.

“The Demon King does not trust the Demons under his command, so he uses his Absolute Control no matter what. You are a Demon dispatched to the human world, yet he didn’t put his fetters over you? You should come up with a more believable lie. Who is it? Who is ordering the Demons away from the eyes of the Demon King?”

“T... that... H... how did...”

Teana stiffened at his words. She faced his unwavering eyes, and her body escaped from the control of her will. Her body started to shake. Blood was flowing from the Mana Strings threaded through her body, yet she was barely cognizant of the pain.

“H... Ho... How...? You... you! Are you a Demon? You are a Demon! You have to be!”

“I’m the one that is asking the questions... are you going to give me an answer?”

Artpe’s words were soft, but his attitude wasn’t tranquil at all. Teana had thought Artpe was merely a hero that was very outstanding compared to his age. Currently, he felt like a god-like existence, who could see right through her. She was having a hard time breathing.

“N... no. I can’t... I can’t tell you anything. I’m following the orders of his majesty, the Demon King. Yes! Hero, you are merely a human boy! What would you know about any of this!”

“You should think hard on it, Teana.”

Artpe raised one hand. A massive amount of magical energy was put into the Mana Strings, and they were packed tightly to form a transparent dagger.

“You aren’t fettered by the Absolute Control, so you are able to talk. Isn’t that right? You are free. You can choose between life or death. It is up to you.”

“N... nope... I won’t. I’m afraid. I can’t talk. I can’t talk. You don’t know, hero. You know nothing.”

Since he didn’t know, he wanted to learn through her.

She said she won’t say anything, and he had no way of forcing it out of her.

However, he did figure out one thing. This woman was about to face death right now, yet she was much more worried about ‘someone else’s wrath’ if she opened her mouth.

“All right. I have no choice, since you won’t talk. In truth, it isn’t as if anything would have changed if I found out his name.”

“What...?”

Artpe gave up on interrogating her. He let go of the sharp Mana Strings he had brought out. Teana was puzzled by his action, but her puzzlement soon turned into fear. She watched as a black cat stepped forward instead of Artpe.

[Nyaa-ah-ah.]

“Ah, no.”

When faced with Roa, Teana finally realized what kind of power was hidden within the cat. In a flash, her fear spread through her body like a wildfire. It dominated her entire body.

“Roa, this is an experiment. It is a very important experiment. You know what to do?”

[Nyaa-ah.]

“No. I’m not doing this, because I like Etna. I don’t want to fight when it is unnecessary.”

[Nyaa-ah, nyaa-nyaa-ah? Nyaa-ooh-ah!]

“You are being noisy. It isn’t like that. Do you want me to get beaten to death by Maetel?”

Even as she heard the affectionate dialogue between the master and servant, Teana’s body started to shake from fear. She used all her strength to move her body, but there was no way she would be able to escape this. Artpe’s smile became twisted when he saw what she was trying to do.

“You guys experimented on humans. I want to conducts a similar experiment. However, I can only conduct this experiment on Demons.”

“No. Don’t do it. I beg of you, hero. Just kill me. Please. You can’t do this.”

“All right. Shut up.”

Artpe smirked as he pushed Roa forward. Roa looked annoyed, but she obliged by opening her mouth.

[Nyaaaaaaah.]

As a Demon, Teana was born with a demonic gene. In a flash, the demonic gene escaped the confines of her body, and Roa's mouth started to suck it out.

“Ggooh-ahhhhhhhhhhhk!”

Teana's ghastly scream filled the entire square. The merfolk had been busily moving around, because of the unbound ancient temple. The horrifying scream brought all of them to a halt as their bodies shuddered.

“Mmm. I don't think you got all of it.”

[Nyaa-ah?]

“Nope. You should suck it all out. You should also monitor what changes occurs to her body and mind during this process.”

“Ggoo-roo-roo-roo-ggoo-ahhhk!”

Teana's screams were getting louder as time passed. However, Artpe and Roa showed no signs of stopping it. Roa used all her might to suck it all out, and in the process, Artpe tinkered with Teana's body. He tried to fix her circuit.

It wasn't as if his actions were fruitless. He was able to modify a portion of how she was wired through his will, but that wasn't enough. It wasn't easy to change the Record of her race.

“Ggoo-ahk! Gooooahk! Kahk, Ggah-goo-goohk!”

The demonification curse had tried to modify the body of Sienna. He was attempting something that was on a different level. He was extracting the demonic gene from a pure-bred Demon, and he was trying to create a new race. If such a task was easy, Artpe would have been a god-like being instead of a human.

He just needed to gain a small hint from this. That would be enough.

“Ah. As expected, I can't do it yet.”

[Nyaa.]

“No. We still earned a significant amount of Record.”

“Hoohk. Ggoo-oohk...”

How long had it been? Teana’s screams seemed like it would never end, but her screams finally lessened in volume. She wasn’t dead, but she was very close to being dead.

Her skin was dyed blue, and her luscious hair had shriveled to resemble roots of green onions. She was barely gasping out her breathe. This was the only evidence that she was alive. She no longer had tears to shed, so blood was flowing out from her eyes. It was hard to tell if she had her eyes opened or closed.

“I... I’ll... I’ll kill... you...!”

It seemed she still had enough energy to spit out those venomous words. Still, Roa had sucked out all her demonic gene, so nothing was left.

Artpe spoke.

“How do you like experiencing this for yourself? You probably now have some idea as to how shitty your actions were. Isn’t that right?”

“You aren’t a hero... You are more like a Demon...!”

“As expected, we are cut from the same cloth, so I can’t hide it. Yes, I think so too.”

Teana’s words were filled with venom, but Artpe acknowledged her words with a cold smile on his face

Of course, not all Demons were evil. However, they lost their innocence and purity over the course of their lives. In the end, they fell to become degenerates. This was why it was amazing to see Etna, who was able to keep her warm heart until the end. This was why he felt great pity for her.

“I was born as a hero, so I was trying to act like a hero. However, it was as I had suspected. I can’t follow the road of a traditional hero. On the other hand, Maetel looked too good in the role, and I couldn’t just leave her alone... I decided to do what works for me, while I support her. What do you think? Isn’t the role distribution between us pretty great?”

“Die...!”

She was at death's door, and she yelled out those words with the last strength she possessed.

It was a trigger for a curse. It was the worst kind of curse. It was a curse casted at the expense of one's life and soul. The curse twisted the destiny of the cursed closer towards death. It was a curse that one would suffer once or twice if one lived amongst the frontlines. The only difference was that the purity of the curse was ridiculous high.

[Nyaa!]

Of course, her final curse was merely a tasty snack for Roa. Artpe stroked her head. Teana let out a hollow laugh when her curse was blocked. She had made the curse by squeezing her soul, yet it was all in vain.

Ah ah. He was an opponent she couldn't beat from the start. Only he could win against this vicious hero. Even he might not...

“Your majesty...!”

It was the last of the last moments for her, and she finally let out the final words befitting an extra. Teana had been the dark secret behind the Archduke's faction, who had shaken up Diaz and the ocean. This was how her life was lost.

Roa let out a small cry as she hopped down onto her body. All the magical energy holding her body together was gone, so her corpse turned into dust. The only thing left behind was what looked to be a spell book.

“What the hell? This isn't a spell book. It is a genuine grimoire.”

In fact, he had been searching for a suitable book he could use as a personal spell book once he acquired an excellent ink called the Kraken's Ink. As it so happens, he had come across this book. Of course, it was a grimoire that was already inscribed with content. It would be a bit troublesome to modify it, but with Artpe's ability...

“...ah.”

A cold smile formed on Artpe's lips as he looked through the grimoire.

Yes. That's right. If he thought about what this woman did in the human world, the content of the book was obvious. He no longer needed to delve deeper into the

grimoire. He put it away.

[Nyaaaa.]

“No. It is mine.”

[Nyaa.]

She hmmped as she sulked. Roa tapped Artpe’s arm with her tail. Artpe petted her as he picked her up, and he turned around. Sherryl was still waiting for him at the same spot.

[Master...]

All kinds emotions were expressed on her face as she stared at him. Artpe was truly embarrassed, so he scratched his head.

“What is it? Did you witness everything? Now that you know what kind of human I am, this should go fast. You shouldn’t serve a master like me. You should just focus on ruling your country. Ah. As a last request, you should forget about what happened right now.”

[Thank you, master.]

“...ehng?”

Wait a moment... What did she say? He heard words that should have never come out of her mouth. Was he mistaken?

“What did you just say?”

He was taken aback, so he asked the question in reply. Sherryl took short steps towards him. She grabbed both his hands as she spoke.

[If it is for you, I will do anything. You became the representative of the merfolk, and you expressed our rage. You punished our enemy the ‘right’ way. Every merfolk of this kingdom will remember your benevolence.]

“Mmmm... Uh...”

What was the right way? What was she talking about? She seemed to have interpreted his actions in a slightly weird way. Moreover, it seemed the misunderstanding was too deep to undo all of this.

Artpe wondered what he had to say to this dumb fish, but he quickly gave up on that train of thought.

“I’m going to go to the temple for now!”

[I will wait for you here, master. Please come back safely!]

He knew something was wrong with Sherryl’s words, which was full of loyalty, but he decided to go to his other party members with Roa for now. An unknown that had never revealed itself in his past life was waiting for him.



PtFF by: traktorA7EN